

**RESOLUTION R**  
*Submitted by Amalgamated Transit Union*  
**DEVELOPING TRANSIT BUS OPERATOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS**

**WHEREAS**, transit has the highest percentage of aging workers in the U.S. among all industries: 35% are over the age of 55; and

**WHEREAS**, the turnover rate for new bus operators is extremely high, and

**WHEREAS**, due to several factors, including low starting pay, split shifts, and dangerous working conditions, there is currently a major bus driver shortage throughout North America, resulting in existing drivers being forced to work overtime – a serious threat to public safety; and

**WHEREAS**, ATU has been a leader in developing innovative transit apprenticeship programs so that bus operators can prepare for the challenges our members face on the job and our union can retain members; and

**WHEREAS**, labor/management partnerships are essential for implementing effective apprenticeship programs; and

**WHEREAS**, ATU Local 265 in San Jose, CA, and the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority have implemented a registered coach operator apprenticeship program which serves as the transit industry gold standard; and

**WHEREAS**, the program, focused on union-appointed mentors, was initiated to address long-standing needs to improve training and increase the retention rate of new drivers, and was developed through a joint labor-management partnership to address workplace operational issues; and

**WHEREAS**, traditional bus driver training has focused on the safe operation of the vehicle, with less attention paid to enhancing and valuing drivers' day-to-day relationships with passengers, even though it is these interactions and issues which often elevate drivers' stress, lead to related health problems; and undermine their commitment to the job; and

**WHEREAS**, Local 265's mentoring and apprenticeship program was built on three core principles: it is worker-centered, community-oriented and reflective of industry needs and standards; and

**WHEREAS**, mentors provide critical street survival skills, dealing with the daily stresses involving passengers, traffic, and the disruptions both on and off the bus -- key to reducing the rising attrition rate among new hires; and

**WHEREAS**, the program also focuses on health and wellness, customer service, and the process of getting acclimated to the job; and

**WHEREAS**, since the inception of the program thirteen years ago, the agency has a 95% retention rate among drivers – well above the industry average; and

**WHEREAS**, customer service complaints and grievances have decreased, absenteeism has been cut, and job satisfaction has risen; and

**WHEREAS**, good training and career ladders give us another tool for reaching out to the communities we serve;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that ATU is committed to supporting the expansion of bus operator apprenticeship programs in the U.S. and Canada modeled after Local 265's program to help build the skills and career opportunities of our transit bus operator members; and

**FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED**, that ATU will work with its industry partners to ensure that local apprenticeship programs are jointly developed and implemented; and

**FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED**, that ATU will continue to work with the Transportation Learning Center to both advance the establishment of such apprenticeship programs and to secure the necessary approvals for federal funding and certification of our apprenticeship programs; and

**FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED**, that ATU will educate our local officers and members on the short and long term benefits of comprehensive apprenticeship and mentoring programs.