



CUTA Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy

2025-2027 Strategic Plan

Shaping the Future of Transit Together

CUTA Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee 2024

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Why Create a Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy?



Canada's transit industry is at a critical point in workforce development.

The Canadian transit industry is at a crossroads when it comes to deciding how to shape the next generation of transit workers. Following the turbulent years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of public transit to the economy, urban and regional infrastructure, and people's well-being in our cities has been further reinforced.

Following the success of the 2016 Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy, this new Strategy aims to continue developing a collaborative, integrated, and holistic nationwide approach to attracting, retaining, and developing youth into the public transit industry to mitigate the workforce challenges of today and tomorrow.

The 2025 to 2027 Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy will equip the industry with multi-faceted and multidisciplinary initiatives to tackle staffing challenges, youth engagement, and leadership development. This Strategy will also guide the development of strategic partnerships with interested individuals and groups to advance the Strategy's initiatives and stream themes.

This Strategy will complement and align with CUTA's 2025 to 2027 Strategic Plan, among other policy and strategic documents.

To ensure the success of this Strategy, both CUTA and CUTA members must continue to take a leadership role in attracting, retaining, and developing youth and emerging leaders to create and maintain a sustainable employee base for the future of public transportation in Canada.

Strategy Development

Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee

CUTA's Youth and Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee is a team of industry professionals devoted to advancing the goals of the Youth and Emerging Leaders Strategy. Assembled in 2016 as the Youth & Emerging Leaders Task Force, its initial mission was to promote transit as a career to Canadian youth nationwide. After expanding its scope through fostering large-scale initiatives such as the Young Leaders Summit, with strong potential for multi-year continuity, the Task Force was elevated to Sub-Committee status in 2022. Reporting directly to CUTA's Workforce Development Committee, the Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee remains one of CUTA's most active working groups.

Stream Leads

The Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy is centred around three themes, or "streams," that provide different foci on engaging youth with public transit. Developed in 2020, "Stream Leads" are champions of each of the Strategy's themes and are tasked with developing, leading, and championing initiatives under their specific stream. A total of 8 new Stream Leads were selected in 2024 to champion the initiatives outlined in this strategic document.

Consultation

The development of this Strategic Plan underwent significant levels of consultation through various channels. The Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee convenes monthly to gather and discuss ideas to support the Strategy's development. Stream Leads leverage this opportunity to consult on their proposed initiatives and gather feedback.

Ongoing feedback and communication with the CUTA Workforce Development Committee and CUTA staff continues to be a hallmark in the success of the Strategy's development and implementation.

In May 2024, a #TransitTrailblazers workshop was hosted at the CUTA Spring Summit in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to consult the CUTA membership to aid the development of the 2025-2027 Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy. Valuable feedback and ideas were collected and reflected in the initiatives and events proposed in this Strategy.



Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy 2016-2024

Preparing for the Next Generation of Transit Professionals in Canada

The first Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy was published in October 2016 by the Youth and Emerging Leaders Task Force with the mission of establishing a nationwide network of Canadian youth, public transit agencies, and post-secondary institutions representing all functional areas of the public transit industry. The Strategy's overall goal was to promote public transit awareness as a career and serve as the foundation for developing future leaders of the public transit industry.

The original Strategy first outlined the three main streams that serve as the foundation for the initiatives proposed by the Youth & Emerging Leaders Task Force (now Sub-Committee). The streams of attracting, retaining, and developing provide a robust structure to increase the number of youth in transit, ensuring they stay in the industry and develop into future leaders in the numerous fields that public transit covers.



Previous Strategy Objectives

- Proactively attract talent to the transit industry through youth engagement tools.
- Monitor in-demand positions and react to changes.
- Engage post-secondary educational institutions.
- Advocate for public transit career opportunities and raise awareness
- Establish a library of resources to assist with youth engagement.

Over the last 8 years, the original Strategy has served well, with numerous accomplishments, milestones, and objectives achieved. In light of a new generation of transit workers, shifting national priorities and concerns, and the emergence of new social media platforms and trends, a new Strategy is needed to keep the Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee's actions up-to-date with current trends and issues being faced by the transit industry and youth wishing to get involved with public transit in Canada.

Past Accomplishments 2016-2024

Retaining Youth to Stay in Transit (continued)

Maintaining a reduced rate for youth interested in attending CUTA events such as the CUTA Spring Summit & Annual General Meeting and the CUTA Annual Conference & Trade Show.



Developing Youth into Leaders in Transit

Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Program

After a successful pilot program in 2018, the Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Program was formally introduced in 2023. Through the guidance of an official Mentorship Toolkit co-developed by the YELSC and CUTA, over 30 pairs of mentor-mentee partners have been instructed to meet at least quarterly with the goal of transferring knowledge and skills from one generation to another.

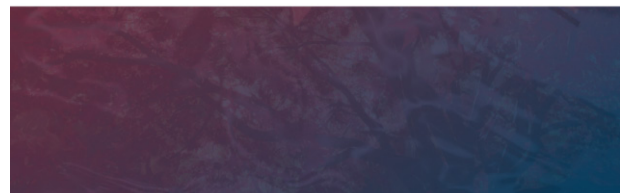


The goals of the Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Program include:

- 1) Increasing the number of professionals choosing a career in the transit industry.
- 2) Providing new transit professionals with a deeper understanding of the industry.
- 3) Fostering transferrable skills through goal-setting and one-on-one training.
- 4) Creating opportunities to acquire knowledge about specializations and roles within the transit industry.
- 5) Developing emerging leaders while championing equity, diversity, and inclusion.



Mentorship Toolkit



Mission

By 2027, we will have established a nationwide network of individuals and organizations interested in advancing youth development in the transit industry. Using this network, we aim to advance youth attraction, retention, and development in all functional areas of the public transit industry through various initiatives, events, and strategic partnerships. This strategic document will serve as the foundation for the development of future transit workers and leaders in light of new trends faced by youth and transit in Canada.

Guiding Principles



Targeting youth outreach to high schools, post-secondary institutions, the trades, and other relevant groups to attract, retain, and develop a new generation of transit workers.



Engaging and partnering with other groups and organizations like the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO), Young Professionals in Transportation (YPT), and others to develop strategic partnerships to advance our objectives and mission.



Monitoring trends and reactions in youth concerning topics, issues, and challenges faced in the public transit industry.



Advocating for career opportunities and awareness.



Supporting mentorship partnerships and encouraging generational transfers of knowledge.



Developing, planning, and executing key youth engagement events and initiatives.

Three Strategy Streams

Attracting, Retaining, & Developing

In This Section:

- Stream Overviews & Descriptions
- Proposed Action Items



Attracting Canadian Youth into the Transit Industry

Stream Leads: Kyle Rouhani & Christina Sugiura

Attracting youth and emerging leaders to the public transit industry is key to creating a strong, robust, sustainable workforce fostering leadership, innovation, and collaboration.

The Attracting Canadian Youth Stream working group is tasked with developing ideas, initiatives, and recommendations to increase the number of young people pursuing a career in public transit in Canada.

Action 1: Future Young Leaders Summits

Launched in 2002, the Young Leaders Summit's main goal was to help Canadian youth explore careers in public transit, with the eventual goal of inspiring these young leaders as local transit ambassadors in their community.

The first four Young Leaders Summits (2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008) were organized by CUTA's Public Affairs group and recruited Canadian youth nationwide. The Young Leaders Summit program was shifted to a regional model in 2011, where CUTA's Regional Committees and host transit systems coordinated and conducted the program in five different cities. The 2013 Young Leaders Summit was held in Calgary, Alberta, emphasizing youth development in transit for locals in Western Canada. Following a six-year programming hiatus due to financial and resource constraints, the Young Leaders Summit was revived in 2019 and hosted in Calgary, Alberta, with over 60 delegates from across the country in attendance. After great success and reception, and following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Young Leaders Summit was hosted in November 2023 in Edmonton, Alberta, with over 60 delegates participating in the three-day youth conference. The next Young Leaders Summit is planned to be hosted in Montreal, Quebec, in 2025, in partnership with the Société de transport de Montréal.



With numerous Young Leaders Summits accomplished, there are many lessons learned on how to improve the planning and effectiveness of the initiative. A review of the Young Leaders Summits would focus on the effectiveness of the program in attracting new talent to our industry, retaining

them to stay involved in transit and CUTA, and understanding what skills are in demand by both the industry and youth to develop them into resilient and innovative young leaders in transit. A review of the program structure (curriculum, timing, etc.) and the financial model (sponsorship, dedicated funding, etc.) are to be included in the scope of this review.

Key Tasks

- **Wider YLS Outreach:** Another key area of interest would include understanding the outreach of this program and assessing its strengths/weaknesses in reaching a broader audience (i.e., students and a broader sector of transit-related professionals). When speaking with other delegates about how they heard about the YLS, many said it was from employers—expanding outreach beyond industry professionals, targeting post-secondary universities with transit-related programs, high-schools and leveraging social media platforms to attract a broader audience to the Youth Leader Summit.
- **Sponsorship Opportunities:** From the last YLS, it was noted that there is a need for more funding and more time to promote the event for the next summit. Increased promotion of the YLS can be better conducted through leveraging social media and partnerships with other organizations to promote the event.
- **Previous YLS Feedback Survey Analysis and Identification of Key Lessons Learned:** Looking at survey results from the last YLS event and survey to understand strengths, challenges and opportunities for the next YLS.



Action 2: Developing Strategic Partnerships with External Organizations to Advance Strategy Goals

Action 2 focuses on attracting and engaging youth in the transit industry to cultivate a diverse, skilled and dedicated future workforce. By establishing and nurturing these partnerships with other transit-related groups, the industry can work together to build and sustain a new generation of talented professionals, ensuring long-term growth while advancing strategy goals to attract youth to the transit industry. Collaborating with external organizations dedicated to similar goals can help reach a diverse range of young professionals from various backgrounds, interested in transit. This will help to enhance the diversity of the future workforce.

Engaging with other organizations interested in similar goals allows us to understand better and address young professionals' interests and concerns, leading to more targeted strategies to attract young professionals to the industry, including events and programming.

Ultimately, this action seeks to create a community and network of youth in the transit industry. It offers youth increased access to events, networking opportunities and other resources while supporting CUTA's YELSC to demonstrate our commitment to attracting young professionals to the industry and support their development and diversity.

Key Tasks

- **Leveraging Partner Networks:** This task will include utilizing established networks and communication channels of CUTA's YELSC and partner organizations to amplify their presence in the industry. Leveraging increased web presence may increase engagement, attract new and current youth to interact with content, and further broaden our outreach. In addition, this can help to cross-promote events and host joint events and other resources through shared networks.
- **Increased Collaboration with External Organizations:** This may include general meetings, workshops and other coworking events, where organizations can discuss common strategic goals, challenges and areas of opportunities and interest for additional perspectives and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

Example organizational collaboration can include partnerships with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the International Association of Public Transport (UITP), Women in Transportation (WITS), and others to determine if there are similar youth programs within their respective organizations



Strategic Partnerships

Can improve engagement, understand interests & concerns, and introduce efficiencies in attracting, retaining, and developing youth into transit

Action 3: Post-Secondary, Co-Op, and Secondary School Outreach

Following the Youth and Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee's #TransitTrailblazers Workshop at the 2024 CUTA Spring Summit, several major themes emerged as barriers to attracting young talent to the industry, including a push to promote transit at the secondary and post-secondary level, particularly for jobs in trades and operations. Transit as a profession is broad, and there are aspects not necessarily covered by existing programs. Planning and engineering programs that currently exist are becoming increasingly siloed; we have the opportunity to unify them again.

With many CUTA YELSC members and leads participating in co-op/internship programs through their studies, many are familiar with this process and the true benefits that co-op brings to exposing students to the possibilities in transit. Co-op is why many YELSC members were able to pursue an opportunity working in transit and continue to be able to today. For students who do not have opportunities for exposure to the industry through co-op programs, there needs to be increased outreach and engagement to attract youth to the industry. Often, students are interested and willing to attend events but may not know about them. This action strategically aims to reach a broad range of youth during their academic journey, from the secondary school level to post-secondary.

Key Tasks

- **Co-Op Program Outreach:** As outlined in the previous Strategy, cooperative education is a strong way to get those involved in the transit industry. As part of this initiative, we aim to put together a document or guide on how agencies can get involved with co-op at post-secondary institutions, including benefits for attracting new talent and institutions with co-op programs.
- **University and Secondary School Engagement:** Coordinating with universities and high schools to establish contact points for collaboration, planning events, information sharing, and engaging with professors for guest speaker opportunities, ensuring students are exposed to transit-related work early on.

This initiative provides opportunities with the Careers in Public Transit Program (CIPTOP) for materials and opportunities promotion in the transit sector

- **Student Organization Partnerships:** Reaching out to student organizations for collaboration, potentially creating a partnership with CUTA to promote transit-related events and opportunities.



Retaining Canadian Youth to Stay in the Transit Industry

Stream Leads: Zachary Bedard & Stefan Papuc

Workforce development and retention have risen to be one of the biggest challenges in the Canadian transit industry, as heard through our consultation process and at past CUTA conferences. Employee turnover has high financial and time costs for transit agencies and businesses, as productivity losses and continuity lapses can be very disruptive.

The Retaining Canadian Youth Stream working group is tasked with developing ideas, initiatives, and strategies to keep emerging leaders involved and engaged with the Canadian transit industry for years.

Action 1: Passion to Promotion Program

The transit industry is one of the few industries where it remains easy to move between positions based on seniority. However, many lower-level roles have low pay and inconsistent work hours and might not directly correspond to the person's interests. Many passionate people join the industry hoping to move up and have spent many years demonstrating they are trusted employees.

The Passion to Promotion program would provide a centralized resource to help employees prepare for the role of their dreams. Central to this program would be CUTA, which would create a platform to explore the types of jobs and career paths available within the transit industry and suggest pathways for advancement from an employee's current position. The program would involve compiling job descriptions for common positions from member agencies and highlighting common requirements such as required certifications. This would allow employees to best prepare for the position before the job is posted, allowing them to complete training & improve their qualifications in advance. For some of the more common requirements, CUTA could provide links to in-house training to fulfill these requirements, such as general health & safety courses and training on the Ontario Human Rights Code.

This could also be useful for smaller agencies, who would be removed from the burden of procuring and providing these courses for their employees on a one-off basis. It could also help harmonize training on accessibility and fare collection best practices across Canadian agencies.



Passion to Promotion Program

A centralized resources to help transit workers prepare for the role of their dreams

“Key to this initiative would be member involvement, with CUTA members contributing their job ads and identifying skills that they are looking for in future transit employees”

Key Tasks

- **Career Information Outreach:** Synergizing with the efforts of the Careers in Public Transit Outreach Program, information about the types of jobs and career paths available within the transit industry is necessary to develop this centralized resource.
- **Platform Development:** Working with CUTA, the YELSC will determine what platform and format the Passion to Promotion Program will be housed in.
- **Member Involvement:** Leveraging existing and future YELSC and CUTA members, the success of this program will require volunteers and information sharing to contribute to the planning, development, and execution of this program.
- **Promotion and Outreach:** “The curation of promotional content will be necessary to inform present & future employees about the program, as well as to recruit agencies to take advantage of the provided training courses.



Action 2: Skills Competition and Bursuary

Retaining people in the transit industry starts with ensuring that they feel their contributions are valued. Many people join the industry with a passion for change but often feel that their specific job doesn't give them the full range of responsibilities to address those gaps.

The second initiative proposed is a skills competition that pairs passionate students with a transit system or private sector partner to help develop innovative solutions to problems. Modelled off the IYAI+ Youth Innovation Challenge from the United States, the program would involve individuals or teams pitching their ideas to a panel of judges, who would award a prize to the winning team. The competition would be useful in pairing talented industry members with organizations who could benefit from their leadership and getting an outside perspective on solving issues that reduce agency "blindspots."

An alternative skill competition would involve CUTA and transit authorities requesting a call for solutions to the problems of specific transit agencies and the industry as identified by CUTA. Inspired by TransLink's Open Call for Innovation, students can register in teams or alone and collectively work on solving pre-identified issues in a competitive environment while having CUTA mentorship and each other for support. Winners would receive a bursary they can use for further education in the transit field, and the winning ideas would receive financial and professional support to help implement them.

Key Tasks

- **Competition Design & Partnerships:** Defining competition objectives, format, and challenges, in collaboration with CUTA, transit agencies, and other key transit industry members and groups.
- **Logistics and Support Structures:** This may include establishing rules, prizes, and forms of guidance frameworks and resources for participants in the competition.
- **Funding and Marketing:** Identifying and securing funding sources to support the competition, as well as promoting the event through targeted outreach to students, industry professionals, and potential sponsors.
- **Event Planning and Execution:** Identifying timing of when the competition will occur, and logistics associated with delivering the competition.



Action 3: Social Media Toolkit Development

Transit Marketing has become a growing area of interest, with many larger agencies emphasizing developing ads and running active social media campaigns to promote the use of transit. Many smaller agencies, however, do not have the resources for these types of promotions, so the public is often unaware of their services.

As part of its efforts to promote transit use among youth & younger audiences, this sub-committee could work with CUTA to actively develop a social media toolkit for use by member agencies, allowing them to post & market themselves more effectively. This toolkit could empower smaller agencies with the tools and strategies to market themselves effectively, even with limited resources. The toolkits could include standardized language and hashtags, customizable graphics and templates, campaign ideas, content calendars, educational resources, and ideas for collaboration with neighbouring transit agencies.

Key Tasks

- **Transit Social Media Research and Needs Assessment:** This may involve gathering input from transit agencies about existing social media practices, marketing needs, challenges, and resources.
- **Developing the Toolkit:** Coordinating with CUTA's Communication team to develop a Social Media toolkit for member agencies to enhance their marketing effectiveness to youth audiences. Toolkit components may include:
 - Standardized Language & Hashtags
 - Engaging Campaign Ideas
 - Best Practices for Content Posting
 - Educational Resources
- **Launching and Promoting the Toolkit:** Once ready, showcasing the toolkit to member agencies through webinars, CUTA events, and more.



Developing Canadian Youth Into Future Leaders in the Transit Industry

Stream Leads: Anthony Dionigi, Kevin Wong & Brittany Lodge

Despite challenges placed on the transit labour force by the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result of increasing retirement rates, the Canadian transit industry continues to innovate in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the next generation of transit leaders must be equipped with the knowledge and skill sets required to handle new and emerging challenges and retain the institutional knowledge held by current and future-departing public transit leaders.

The Developing Canadian Youth Stream working group is tasked with developing ideas, initiatives and strategies that support leadership development among CUTA's new, early, and mid-career professionals.

Action 1: Future Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Programs

The Leaders Building Leaders mentorship program fosters the development of emerging leaders in the transit industry. The program connects young professionals in the transit industry looking to accelerate their careers with seasoned transit professionals willing to impart their knowledge to help the next generation. It is an opportunity to expand networks and build professional relationships.

The primary objectives of this initiative are to enhance the mentorship program experience for both mentors and mentees, ensuring it is more engaging, impactful, and rewarding for all involved. A key focus will be reducing barriers and minimizing the strain associated with participation, making the program more attractive to potential mentors and fostering a more supportive environment. We are committed to addressing the concerns and recommendations of both current and past participants to ensure continuous improvement.

Our approach includes reviewing the existing program, conducting it in close collaboration with CUTA staff, monitoring progress, and identifying areas for enhancement. We will analyze data from past mentorship surveys and engagement results to gain deeper insights into the program's effectiveness and areas for growth. Engaging with past and current participants will be crucial in gathering actionable feedback to drive meaningful changes. By identifying and implementing strategies to alleviate any burden or strain, we



we aim to create a more sustainable and fulfilling program. Furthermore, we will explore innovative opportunities to foster increased interactions and collaboration between different mentors and mentees, ultimately enriching the mentorship experience for everyone involved.

Key Tasks

- **Mentorship Program Review:** This task begins with examining the current structure and logistics of the CUTA Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Program, reviewing feedback collected from alums of the program, and interviewing people who are responsible for or familiar with the program. We will also explore opportunities to reach out to people who were interested in but did not ultimately partake in the program.
- **Peer Program Review:** We will briefly review mentorship programs offered by other transportation, planning and engineering organizations and compare their effectiveness with CUTA's program.
- **Recommendations to Improve the Mentorship Program:** Once a snapshot of the program is established, we will work to assess the effectiveness of the current CUTA Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Program, identify any barriers that deter potential mentors and mentees, and recommend any modifications that will enhance the program. We will collaborate with CUTA staff to support and monitor future Leaders Building Leaders Program.



Action 2: CUTA Job Board Revamping & Website Updates

The CUTA job board provides public access to employment opportunities in transit from agencies and organizations across Canada.

The primary goals of this initiative are to enhance the functionality and overall usefulness of the CUTA job board, raise awareness of the platform among employers and potential applicants, and explore additional channels for sharing transit-related job postings. To achieve these objectives, we will review the current job board and evaluate its existing functionalities, strengths, and drawbacks.

Internal discussions with the Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee and CUTA staff will be crucial in identifying potential improvements, including addressing any technical challenges or limitations that may hinder the job board's effectiveness.

We will explore opportunities to enhance the platform's functionalities, such as implementing advanced filtering options to improve user experience. Additionally, we will investigate alternative channels for job posting outreach, including leveraging LinkedIn posts, distributing quarterly emails, and promoting opportunities at CUTA conferences to broaden the reach and impact of the job board.

Key Tasks

- **Job board review:** We will examine the current CUTA job board and meet with CUTA staff to learn about the functionalities and limitations of the job board launched on the new CUTA website.
- **Exploring Useful Features:** Job board features that will be conducive to potential job applicants will be identified through discussions with Youth Leaders Committee members and other transportation professionals and a brainstorming session.
- **Recommending and Implementing Features:** A list of proposed additional features for the new CUTA job board will be based on the aforementioned review and conversations and ranked according to their perceived usefulness. We will work with CUTA technical staff to evaluate the feasibility of these features and support the implementation of achievable features.

Complimentary Initiatives

Projects and programs that have the support of the Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee and the Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy but are quasi-independent with separate forms of leadership, management, and organizational structure.

In This Section:

- Careers in Public Transit Outreach Program
- Minding the Gap

Careers in Public Transit Outreach Program (CIPTOP)

YELSC Careers in Public Transit Outreach Program Liaison: Chris French

The Careers in Public Transit Outreach Program is a key initiative supported by the CUTA Workforce and Development Committee and the Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA). The program is developing a coordinated outreach strategy to increase awareness and inspire the pursuit of career opportunities in public transit across Canada, from operators and supervisors to planners and engineers to product designers and sales representatives.

A key product of this program will be establishing contacts and relationships with secondary, post-secondary and trade schools that can be leveraged to recruit more talent into the public transit industry. The YELSC will continue liaising with the Careers in Public Transit Program and, where feasible, may contribute and assist in initiatives that can advance the goals and objectives of this Strategy.



CIPTOP Mission:

To inspire the pursuit of career opportunities in public transit through education, programs and collaboration, across all sectors and geographies, early and often.

Key Objectives



Building a Library
of Presentation
Materials



Fostering & Forging
Transit Industry
Connections



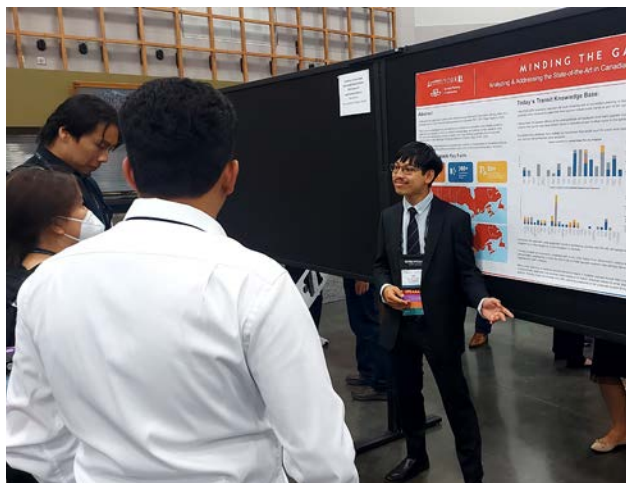
Building & Promoting
a Culture of
"Outreach"

Minding the Gap: Transit Education Research Project

Principal Investigators: Timothy Young & Patrick Yutiga

The transit industry continues to face growing workforce challenges as an aging workforce retires alongside rapid growth and innovation (Paget-Seekins, 2023). New graduates are needed to fill positions for projects and agencies that are increasingly multidisciplinary and technical. At Canadian Universities, transit-specific planning and engineering courses are rare overall (TAC, 2017), which could create barriers for new graduates without valuable skills and experience. The authors are performing a multi-phase project to explore the impact of the variability in transit curriculum through the perspectives of students, faculty, and industry and address this gap by developing a new educational framework for Canadian Universities connecting transit planning and engineering.

In 2023, Phase 1 of Minding the Gap was presented at ITE's Annual Conference in Portland, the CUTA's Conference & Trade Show, and the Ontario Transportation Expo. Phase 1 involved cataloguing courses and launching tailored surveys to collect more detailed opinions on transit education nationwide (Ethics Protocol e2023-233). This was well received, with excellent engagement from students in particular and spurred new conversations and connections. Phase 2 explores the results of the surveys alongside new and ongoing initiatives in Canada to attract, develop, and retain Canada's future transit workforce.



The survey results will explore the transit knowledge, interest, and satisfaction level with the curriculum for students enrolled in planning and engineering programs in Canada. This will be compared with the perspectives of faculty members teaching or researching transportation engineering/planning in Canada and transit industry professionals' opinions to identify the existing gaps. The analysis will evaluate the extent of transit concepts taught and explore barriers that challenge students from pursuing transit as a career or dissuade academics from increasing transit content in their courses.

This phase will also highlight initiatives from the Canadian transit industry, including youth leadership summits, mentorship programs, and committees. By exploring how each initiative supports the next generation of transit professionals, the optimal role for an educational framework can be determined, and ideal connections to provide a continuous pathway from interest to the workforce can be identified.

Finally, the remaining work needed to assemble, develop, and apply the framework for the final phase will be highlighted, including the role that transit agencies, consultancy firms, and industry partners can play to ensure a sustainable transit workforce.

Minding the Gap Phase 1: ITE Portland Poster Presentation

Abstract

- With continued public transit system growth and increasing retirements in the transit industry, there is a growing need for more new skilled transit planners and engineers (TAC, 2017; Paget-Seekins, 2023).
- The current accredited planning and engineering curricula lacks dedicated public transit courses in planning and engineering, which can pose as a major barrier to entry for new graduates pursuing transit as a career.
- Minding the Gap aims to evaluate the availability and suitability of transit content in Canadian university programs to support the workforce and skillset needs of the transit industry today and in the future.

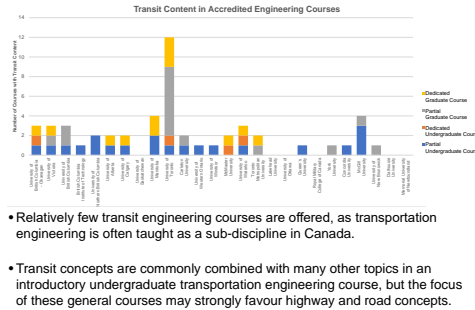
Transit in Canada Key Facts:



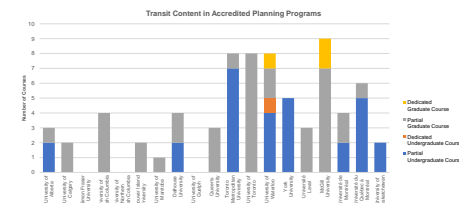
- Universities with dedicated transit courses tend to cluster in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area and Southern Ontario.
- In other areas, particularly in Eastern and Central Canada, universities do not explicitly list transit as a topic in their course descriptions.

Today's Transit Knowledge Base:

- The 2023-2024 academic calendars for each university with an accredited planning or engineering program were reviewed to determine what courses include public transit as part of the curriculum.
- The academic calendars for each university with an accredited planning or engineering program were reviewed to determine what courses include public transit as part of the curriculum.
- Complimentary electives from outside the department that would count for credit were included, and any courses not scheduled were excluded.



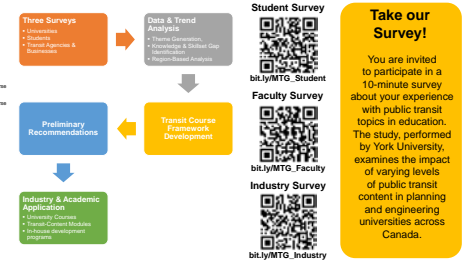
- Relatively few transit engineering courses are offered, as transportation engineering is often taught as a sub-discipline in Canada.
- Transit concepts are commonly combined with many other topics in an introductory undergraduate transportation engineering course, but the focus of these general courses may strongly favour highway and road concepts.



- Many urban planning universities include transit concepts in multiple courses across their programs. This more distributed approach may provide more exposure to transit concepts related to other planning aspects. It should be noted that many universities only offer planning programs at the graduate studies level.

A Closer Look & Next Steps

- The variability in the Canadian curriculum provides an opportunity to discover how the level of transit concepts taught affects the interest and ability of graduating students to meet Canada's professional transit workforce needs.
- The researchers have launched three surveys, tailored to university faculty, students, and industry professionals to determine trends in transit education, knowledge gaps that companies and graduating students experience, barriers that discourage students from entering the transit industry.
- A region-based analysis will also be performed to evaluate how geographically aligned course content, interests, and demands are.



Conclusion & Future Research

- Areas with smaller urban areas with less-expansive transit systems and fewer institutions can be hypothesized to correlate with a lack of transit content available in course materials.
- The project's next stage will also explore the impacts of this variability and may reveal more details on curriculum gaps and barriers.
- These details may help faculties add and improve their transit content, whether through their own programs or the development of standard off-the-shelf course modules.
- Planning and engineering graduates can be more prepared to support, design, and build Canada's future transit systems by increasing emphasis on transit content and bridging the gap in Canadian post-secondary education.

Minding the Gap Phase 2: ITE Philadelphia Poster Presentation

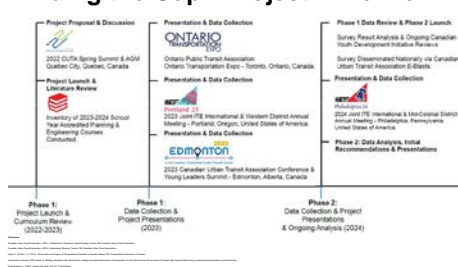
Abstract

- Transit-specific planning & engineering courses are rare, posing barriers for new graduates wanting to pursue a career in transit, despite the growing demand for more planners & engineers (TAC, 2017; Paget-Seekins, 2023).
- Minding the Gap Phase 1 aimed to evaluate the availability and suitability of transit content in Canadian universities to support the workforce and skillset needs of the transit industry today and in the future.
- Following excellent engagement nationwide and at ITE Portland 2023, Minding the Gap Phase 2 analyzes and compares the perspectives of students, faculty, and transit industry members with regards to knowledge, interest, skillset performance/demand, among other factors, in order to identify gaps between these distinct groups and address public transit workforce issues in Canada.
- Phase 2 will also highlight initiatives by the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) that support youth development in transit to determine how Minding the Gap results can be optimized through various mediums and channels.

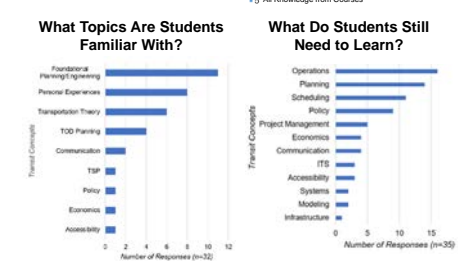
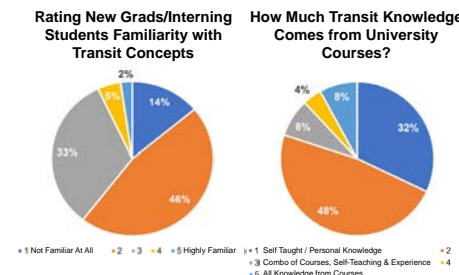
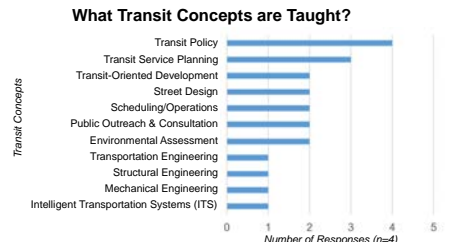
Minding the Gap - Curriculum Review



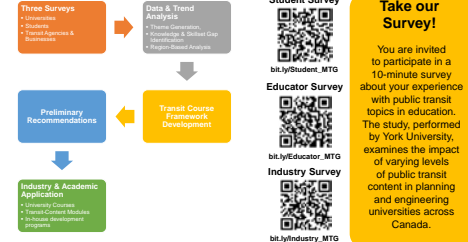
Minding the Gap - Project Timeline



Key Preliminary Results



Research Outlook & Future Phases



Supporting Initiatives in the Canadian Public Transit Industry

Initiative	Description
CUTA's Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee	A national committee responsible for youth leadership development, advocacy & representation, and the oversight and administration of initiatives such as the Young Leaders Summit, the Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Program, and more.
CUTA's Leaders Building Leaders Mentorship Program	A national mentorship program that pairs early-stage professionals with experienced transit mentors to provide career guidance, education opportunities, support, and retention strategies.
CUTA's Young Leaders Summit	A 3-day youth conference aimed at engaging and inspiring the next generation of transit leaders. The conference involves an intense curriculum filled with networking opportunities, technical tours, learning sessions, and case competitions.
CUTA's Careers in Public Transit Outreach Program	A program aimed to identify key resource challenges and priorities for attracting staff in the public transit. The program aims to develop resources that will allow transit professionals to engage with students and other job-seekers to promote careers in transit, while creating a culture of outreach within and outside of the Canadian transit industry.

Proposed Events

Events the encompass one or more of the YELSC Strategy Streams: Attracting, Retaining, & Developing

In This Section:

- Profiles of Success Sessions
- Youth & Emerging Leaders Mixers & Socials
- Youth in Transit Spotlights
- Non-Corporate Events

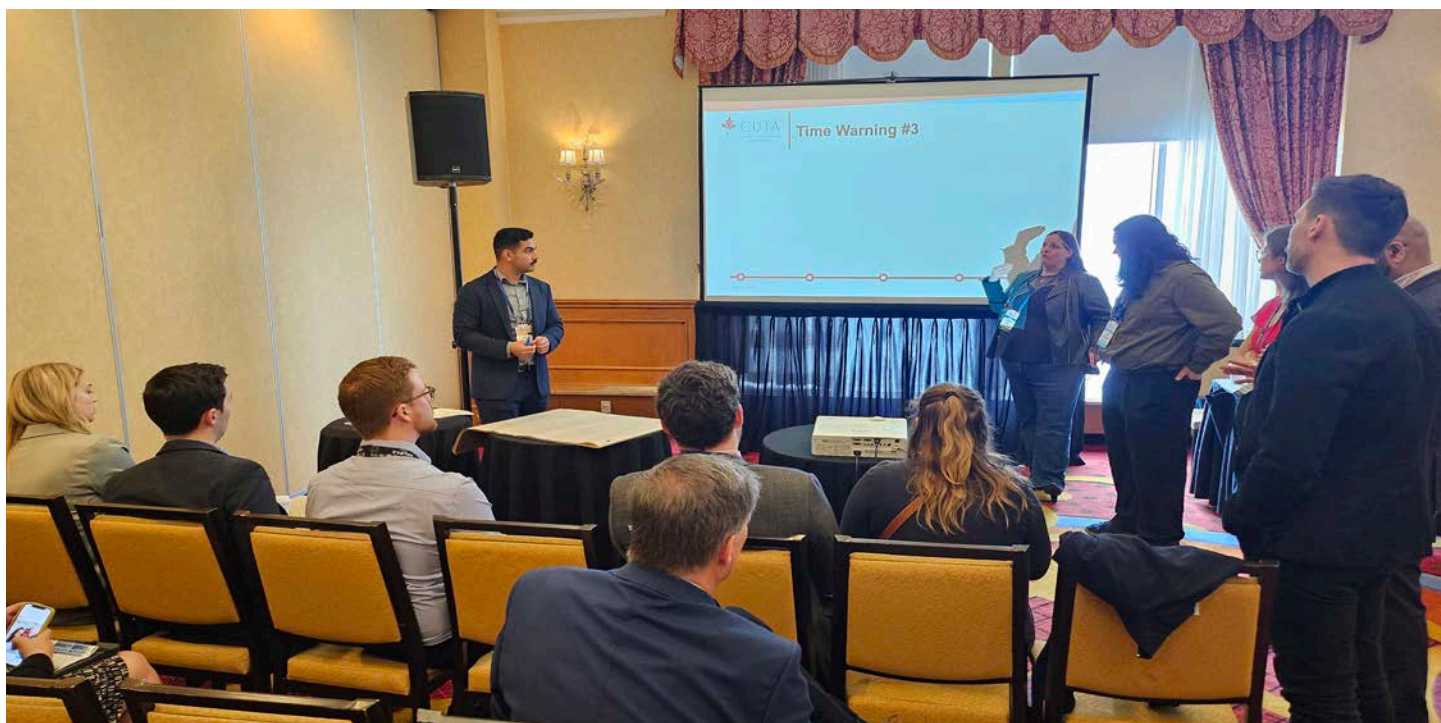


Profiles of Success Conference Sessions

The YELSC's "Profiles of Success" session will feature a panel discussion with transit industry representatives sharing successful hiring and professional development strategies for young workers. To contextualize the discussion and shed light upon the push and pull factors for employment in this industry, the panel discussion will be preceded by a brief section highlighting the profiles of youth and seasoned professionals who have chosen a career in transit.

Following the Youth and Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee's Workshop at the 2024 CUTA Spring Summit in Halifax, Nova Scotia, several major themes emerged as barriers to attracting young talent to the transit industry. These include:

- **Institutional barriers deterring youth**, such as seniority requirements, working hours, and lack of opportunities to build hands-on experience.
- **Lack of diversity** and youth representation in recruitment efforts.
- **Decline of transit's perception as a "premium job"** with high growth potential, good pay and benefits, and long-term job security.
- **A push to promote transit at the secondary and post-secondary level**, particularly for jobs in trades and operations
- **A desire to understand alternatives to jobs in transit in a competitive labour market**, to better tailor recruitment strategies to outcomes

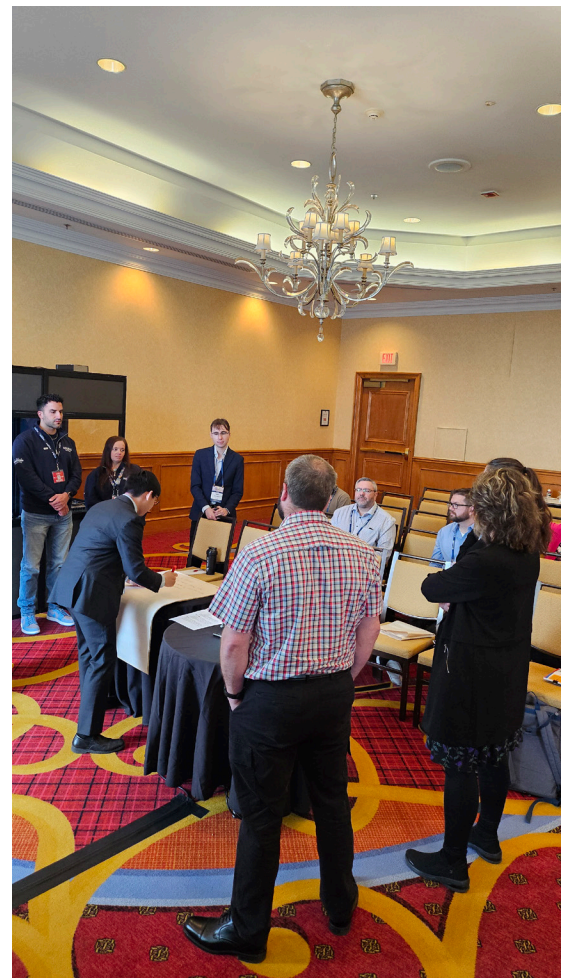


Responding to these needs, the YELSC proposes a Profiles of Success session. This session will primarily take the form of a panel discussion of transit industry representatives sharing successful hiring and professional development strategies for young workers. Given the wide array of verticals within the transit industry, this panel discussion will provide accounts from across the spectrum of career pathways to provide attendees with a varied and diverse perspective.

To contextualize the discussion and shed light upon the push and pull factors for employment in this industry, the panel discussion will be preceded by a brief section highlighting the profiles of both youth and seasoned professionals who have chosen a career in transit. Attendees will leave the session with a clearer understanding of how to embrace the innovative ideas of young professionals and cultivate a sustainable transit workforce among Canadian youth.

Key Topics Will Include:

- **Industry Perspectives:** The skills and attributes employers seek in hiring young talent. This session will explore the essential skills and attributes that industry professionals seek when hiring young talent. Participants will gain insights into how students and recent graduates can better prepare themselves for the job market, including tips for standing out during the application and interview process.
- **Youth Experiences:** Understanding the challenges and insights in the job search process and working as a young professional in the industry. This session will delve into youth's challenges during the job search process, providing insights into what motivates and drives today's youth in their career choices. It will also offer practical advice for youth entering the workforce.
- **Strategies for Improving Communication** between industry professionals and young talent: The session explores how organizations can cultivate more inclusive and supportive environments for young professionals, emphasizing the crucial roles of mentorship and professional development in nurturing their growth.



Youth & Emerging Leaders Mixers & Socials

These events aim to provide young professionals with opportunities to grow, connect, and advance in their careers. Participants will benefit from networking, skill development, resource sharing, and community building.

The events will offer a platform for young professionals, emerging leaders, and transit staff to connect with peers, mentors, and industry experts, helping them build valuable networks. Participants can enhance skills like communication, leadership, and teamwork in an informal setting. Through networking, they will gain exposure to diverse perspectives and innovative ideas to inspire new approaches to their work.

Additionally, these events will foster a sense of community, allowing participants to exchange industry insights, job leads, and educational resources. Some events may include workshops or speakers focused on professional growth, providing attendees with tools to advance their careers. We will aim to offer these mixers at low or no cost wherever possible.

To promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the transit industry, we will host mixers targeting specific groups, such as equity-seeking populations and students, as well as open mixers for everyone from front-line staff to managers. We will partner with public and private organizations to explore new opportunities for these events.



Youth in Transit Spotlights

Young professionals and leaders entering the transit industry have some of the best ideas and are undertaking important projects and studies that could address some of the biggest challenges facing transit systems across Canada. Many of these ideas, projects and studies challenge the status quo and could transform how we plan, prioritize, fund and operate our transit systems.

Similar to Mass Transit magazine's Top 40 Under 40, this proposal consists of a Top 3 Under 30 or Top 5 Under 25 transit showcase. The YELSC will invite submissions from young and emerging leaders at organizations in the CUTA membership, post-secondary schools and the Canadian transit industry-wide through channels established within CUTA and the Careers in Public Transit Outreach Program to present an innovative project or idea that has - or could - greatly impact public transit in their community, across the country or industry. Chosen submissions will be contacted and invited to present their project or idea in a one-hour session at the annual CUTA conference. Chosen participants will each have ten minutes to present their project, study findings or idea, followed by a short panel discussion focused on their projects and broader experiences as young professionals in the industry. Hosts on the YELSC will moderate the presentations and panel discussions.

Submissions would be received through an online portal hosted on the CUTA website and evaluated by dedicated members of the YELSC. Once the three successful submissions have been chosen, applicants will be formally invited to attend the conference. Currently, presenters can attend the CUTA conference for free on the day they are presenting. However, should they choose to attend the conference, they must pay half price (currently approximately \$650). Acknowledging that CUTA represents transit professionals across Canada who may need to travel to the conference, and students outside of the CUTA membership may lack financial resources, it is recommended that opportunities for further financial assistance are explored with CUTA in developing this initiative to ensure that applicants with winning submissions can come and present their findings.

Non-Corporate Events

Transit systems are complex and connected organizations, and having the opportunities to explore and understand these moving parts is invaluable for the career development of young professionals. We aim to host a series of non-corporate events, such as walks, tours, talks, and so on, nationwide in collaboration with transit agencies and other organizations (such as ITE, YPT, and CIP). This will allow us to sustain the momentum developed at CUTA conferences and Youth Leaders' Summit and engage more people across the country year-round. We will connect with transit agencies and organizations in diverse geographies across the countries - from big metros to small cities, university towns to rural areas - to identify physical or virtual event opportunities where young professionals can learn about the unique transit systems around the country, and transit agencies and organizations, especially those that typically receive less exposure, have the opportunity to meet and attract potential talent. We will aim to offer events at reduced or zero costs for young and prospective professionals wherever and whenever possible.

Next Steps

The 2025 to 2027 Youth & Emerging Leaders Strategy was prepared for submission to CUTA's Workforce Development Committee to provide a guideline for initiatives targeted at attracting, retaining, and developing young and emerging leaders within the transit industry. The initiatives and ideas in this Strategy will support the development of Canada's transit industry now and in the future and will provide significant value for CUTA members.

As demonstrated by the initiative and ideas developed by the Strategy team, over-reliance on volunteer time and a lack of dedicated funding to pursue particular initiatives present potential risks that some initiatives' planning, development, and implementation may be delayed or deferred. The initiatives recommended include and encourage continued participation from YELSC members and new recruits; however, CUTA staff support and, in some cases, funding will be necessary to ensure the successful implementation of this Strategy's recommendations.

Following the adoption of this Strategy by the Youth & Emerging Leaders Sub-Committee, the Workforce Development Committee, and CUTA, a prioritization exercise by the Stream Leads and the Sub-Committee will be undertaken to understand quick wins, timelines, and resource requirements.





