



## **School Transportation Task Force Meeting Notes**

March 19, 2024 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

[SB23-094](#)

**Task Force Members Present:** Chad Miller, Jana Schleusner, Stephanie Hansen, Erin Camper, Leiton Powell, Casey Unga, Joel Newton, Dustin Kress, Trevor Byrne, Daine Shiele, Robert DiPietro, Morgan Judge, Dave Slothower, Brenda Dickhoner, Kaycee Headrick, Nicholas Martinez, Jessica Morrison, Kevin Vick, Robert DiPietro

**Task Force Members Absent:** Steve McCracken, Michelle Exstrom, Amy Lloyd, Albert Samora, David Werner, Jen Douglas, Micheal Madden, Sarah Swanson

**Facilitator, & Support:** Dillinger Research and Applied Data- Kate McDonald and Sarah Sullivan, Colorado Department of Education- Susan Miller, Rich Hull, Allison Nicotera, Ian Hecker, Jennifer Oakes, Molly Homburger, and Rebecca Sykes

### **Welcome and Agenda Review**

- Meeting started at 10:05 as a number of members of the Task Force needed meeting links emailed to them.
- Kate reviewed the agenda items (slide 3), guidelines for interactions, deliberation, and collaboration (slide 4), and design thinking (slide 5).

### **Agenda Item #1- Data Collection Updates**

- Kate provided the members with a Data Collection Update (slide 6&7)
  - Since forwarding the surveys to individuals across the state the Task Force has received 1360 parent/guardian responses and 450 driver responses.
  - Some of the collected driver survey data will be reviewed later in the meeting, while the remaining data collected will be reviewed in April.
  - Survey responses have been collected from districts across the state although not all districts have completed surveys.
  - Districts are in the process of filling out the data requests and have until the end of the month to complete the process.
  - Task Force members were asked to reach out to any districts that they have contact with and encourage them to fill out the data request in its entirety.
- Kate reviewed the current project plan and the topic areas scheduled for today's meeting.
- Brenda raised concerns about the meeting currently scheduled for July and felt that due to summer and vacation schedules it might be hard for the Task Force to reach quorum.
- Nicholas agreed and suggested that instead of a meeting in July two meetings be held during another month to make up the schedule.
- Kate indicated that she could send out a survey following the meeting to determine whether making quorum at the July meeting was likely to be an issue and help determine what would be an optimal schedule for the majority of Task Force members.
  - A quick vote was taken to move forward with sending a survey out to determine if the July meeting needed to be rescheduled. (all members present voted 5s)

### **Agenda Item #2- Talent Pipeline Report**

- Kate reviewed the language regarding a Transportation Talent Pipeline and Driver Salaries and Benefits that are covered in SB23-094 (slide 9)
- She reminded the members that the Task Force was tasked with developing recommendations on how to move the work forward but that did not mean that they needed to develop specific legislation or determine all the details of a Talent Pipeline or Driver Salaries and Benefits.
- Kate reviewed the major transportation related takeaways from the Demand section of the 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report (slides 10-18).
  - Colorado Economy covered the annual growth rate in the state, the importance of a focus

on small businesses, the growing number of late career (65+) workers in the state, the change in the population of job seekers, and the importance of addressing the needs of a more diverse workforce and traditionally marginalized populations.

- Supply and Demand covered changes in demand for Colorado's top job sectors, the importance of workers earning a livable wage, growth in populations in various regions across the state (in particular rural areas), job growth and loss in transportation, and in-demand certificates.
- Nicholas asked if there was any data regarding transportation that was separated in the private and public sector.
- Kate indicated the data that she had seen was separated by school bus drivers and public bus drivers but there may be other classifications in the report that she had not reviewed.
- Susan mentioned to the group that the CDL licensing happens in February so the number of job seekers with CDLs would likely increase at the beginning of each year.
- Leiton mentioned that for several of the job postings in his district additional endorsements are required beyond the standard CDL. As a result he said that some job seekers will withdraw their application because they don't want to take on the additional training.
- Susan mentioned that she had training materials that could help in these situations and she would be happy to share those materials with him.
- Daine said that he knew individuals who would also be interested in the endorsement training as well.
- Kate reviewed the major transportation related takeaways from Sector Partnerships of the 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report (slide 20).
  - Sector Partnerships covered HB21-1264.
- Jessica mentioned that her organization (SW Colorado Education Collaborative) holds one of the sector partnership grants.
- Kate asked Jessica to talk to the group a little bit about the grant and discuss bright spots and challenges.
- Jessica discussed how funds can be utilized and some of the difficulties that came with certain restrictions. She also discussed some of the challenges that come from discussing regional issues and the benefits of utilizing regional intermediaries in the work.
- Nicholas asked if Jessica could give an example of what sector partnerships might look like and/or do.
- Jessica discussed how there is a sector convener who identifies specific groups and then recruits and works with industry leaders to discuss challenges in industry. Once challenges are identified the group communicates findings to various outlets to help alleviate identified issues and challenges.
- Kate reviewed the major transportation related takeaways from Skills-based Hiring and Work-based Learning of the 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report (slide 21).
  - Skills-based Hiring and Work-based Learning covered HB22-1215 and Executive Orders 2022-12 and 2023-18.
- Jessica mentioned that her organization was also involved in some of this work and HB22-1215 was being utilized to help drive some of the work identified through sector partnerships.
- Kate reviewed the major transportation related takeaways from Short-term Credential Pipelines of the 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report (slide 22).
  - Short-term Credential Pipelines covered the importance of providing a means for low-income workers to be able to earn degrees and certifications without the complication of forgoing needed wages. Additionally, it covered the concept of stackable credential pipelines to enable jobseekers to earn multiple certifications at the same time.
- Nicholas asked how programs for these pipelines are chosen or approved.
- Jessica explained that each year CDIP creates an approved list of programs that can be used towards short-term stackable credential pipelines. She mentioned that there are already some programs in use at schools across the state, however there are challenges from the school perspective with regards to the reimbursement process. A single pool is utilized to reimburse schools so amounts can vary depending on how many students are eligible. Additionally, some programs are limited by the age of the student.
- Susan mentioned that there are some schools in the state piloting CDL programs but it can be a challenge since students must be at least 18 years of age to qualify. She did mention that those that are piloting seem to be working.

- Kate reviewed the major transportation related takeaways from Care Forward Colorado of the 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report (slide 23).
  - Care Forward Colorado works to provide zero-cost training for in-demand fields. Specific fields have been identified in the original launch of the program as well as the expanded bill HB23-1246.
- Kate reviewed the major transportation related takeaways from the Public Workforce System of the 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report (slide 24).
  - The Public Workforce System looks to provide services and resources to help connect employers and qualified job seekers.
- Kate reviewed the recommendations from the 2023 Colorado Talent Pipeline Report (slides 25-27).
  - Recommendations included Strengthening Support for Employers Talent Development, Increasing Availability of Career Connected Learning Opportunities, and Investing in High Impact Opportunities.

### **Agenda Item #3- Minimum Requirements for Talent Pipelines**

- Kate asked the group what ideas from the report they were most interested in, felt would be the most impactful, or wanted to take a deeper look at.
- Susan mentioned that she thought the older workforce might be a good resource for zero-cost training similar to what is being offered through the Care Forward initiative.
- Nicholas said that he liked the Care Forward initiative but felt that it would be only a temporary fix since once the older workers retired they would lose the trainers and be back to square one. He mentioned that he liked the short-term credential path but wondered what work-based learning would entail for younger individuals. He also wondered whether regional sector partnerships could look a little different so that the discussion was more of a starting point.
- Leiton mentioned to the group that he sees a real issue with job seekers getting additional endorsements beyond the standard CDL and wondered about changes to regulations.
- Jessica responded to Nicholas' question/comment by mentioning that sector partnerships help identify challenges and bottlenecks and that identification of these potential issues could be used by the sector convener to work to build stackable programs that could be into high schools. She also recommended that the work could be done in tandem with rural collaboratives like existing non-profits and BOCES who could work alongside the conveners. Challenges and bottlenecks identified in the work could be addressed by these rural groups. She pointed out that Arizona has done something similar and has reduced the age requirements to gain hours and experience to work up to earning the CDL.
- Kate asked Jessica if she was suggesting that the Task Force recommend sector partnerships but also recommend what should be the preliminary focuses.
- Jessica said she wouldn't recommend that because ultimately the strategies would be best and most effective if developed by the rural intermediaries such as BOCES.
- Dave supported Leiton's concern about job seekers not wanting to spend significant amounts of time to earn endorsements for some jobs. He wondered whether the group could consider providing opportunities for students and adults to earn credentials at no cost with a requirement of 2 years of service. He also mentioned that in trade unions workers can't log hours until they are 18 years of age but apprenticeship program hours can be logged towards the union prior to the individual being 18 years of age, increasing the incentive for potential job seekers. He highlighted that this is the heart of Career Technical Education programs and it would be a good place to focus future efforts.
- Daine supported and agreed with what Leiton and Dave had discussed.
- Dave mentioned that in his district they were struggling to find drivers as scheduled and they were forced to partner with commercial agencies to help fill in the gaps.
- Jessica mentioned that her organization was also dealing with this problem and had been trying to secure full-time workers.
- Chad agreed with the previous comments but mentioned that at the core of attracting and retaining workers was a discussion about necessary incentives that will help build the workforce.
- Kate mentioned that salaries, benefits and incentives would be the topic of discussion after the break.
- Kate proposed that the "Task Force would like to move forward with Short-term Credentials, Regional Sector Partnerships, Existing Infrastructure (such as partnerships with BOCES and

- enhancement of CTE programs), and potential Regulatory Adjustments if possible.
- A vote was taken and all votes were 5s.

#### **FIFTEEN MINUTE BREAK (11:37AM)**

***Discussion resumed at 11:51 AM***

#### **Agenda Item #4- Driver Survey Results**

- Kate reviewed the driver survey data analyzed to date (slides 31-48). She mentioned to the group that additional surveys have been taken since the analysis was completed so the new data would be checked to confirm it didn't change any of the results in a major way. Additionally, she mentioned that the data reviewed today would only be related to questions addressing salaries and benefits. All questions pertaining to eligibility and utilization would be reviewed at the next meeting.
  - Driver survey responses were received from across the state and across all job types.
  - Most drivers have their CDL
  - Majority do not have a second job although second jobs are much more prevalent in rural areas compared to metro and urban/suburban areas.
  - Most individuals with a second job indicated that their pay was not sufficient
  - Some individuals indicated they had the second job due to a lack of drivers in the district or because they were teachers in the district and were not making enough in those positions.
  - Vast majority of drivers are paid hourly
  - Those individuals being paid salary had a wide range of salaries but typically rural areas had lower salaries on average
  - Those individuals being paid hourly were typically making between \$20-\$30 per hour and the majority worked between 20-39 hours a week during the academic year only.
  - More rural areas were typically scheduled to work less hours but could sometimes increase hours but filling in when there were driver gaps.
  - Using the information collected from hourly paid drivers the average driver was probably making no more than \$27K a year in their position.
- Robert mentioned that his district has gone to 4 day school weeks so the estimates for yearly pay would be even lower since they had been based on a 5 day school schedule.
- Jennifer Okes mentioned that 130 districts/BOCES have at least one school with 4 day school weeks so the \$27K estimate was probably high for many district workers.
- Kevin asked if any information on benefits had been collected in the survey.
- Kate indicated that it had been collected and the group would be reviewing that next.
- Kate reviewed that the survey data indicated that across all district settings and position types, the majority of drivers had received a pay increase or some type of pay incentive since beginning in their position. Most also indicated that the frequency of these incentives occurred at most once a year or less frequently.
- Susan mentioned to the group that bonuses and raises have been a recent phenomenon due largely to the current shortage of drivers across the state.
- Stephanie asked how many districts were represented in the driver survey thus far.
- Kate said that she would need to check and get back to her with that information.
- Kate reviewed that the survey data indicated that the majority of respondents indicated that benefits were available through their current position. Additionally, 80% indicated that health, dental, and vision were all available.
- Susan clarified that the questions had not asked if the benefits were covered by the employer or whether the employee was covering the cost.
- Kate confirmed that Susan was correct.
- Daine added in the comments that in many districts that he was aware of benefits that were only available to the driver and not their entire family. If families are added there is a large out of pocket expense to the driver.
- Kate reviewed that the survey data indicated that the majority of drivers indicated they had not received a promotion since beginning their position and of those that had received a promotion only 77% had received a pay raise in conjunction with the promotion. A majority of drivers had never driven for another organization. Those that had typically switched positions for better pay, benefits, hours, less stress, and better work culture. Some indicated that they had come out of

retirement to return to driving due to the shortage of drivers. The survey highlighted that there is huge variability with regards to how long drivers have been in their position. When asked why drivers had chosen their position, respondents across the board indicated good hours, work culture, and good working conditions. Respondents in rural areas also mentioned flexibility, while respondents in metro and urban/suburban areas indicated good benefits and pay. The majority of drivers indicated that they planned to stay in their current position although metro and urban/suburban drivers were slightly more likely to say so compared to drivers in more rural areas. 82% of respondents that indicated they planned to leave or might leave their current position said that better pay would encourage them to stay.

#### **Agenda Item #5- Minimum Requirements for Salaries and Benefits**

- Susan mentioned to the group that many rural drivers are ranchers and as a result flexibility in their schedule was a large factor in attracting and retaining them.
- Daine asked if additional analysis could be done to better understand what would be most likely to bring drivers in and retain them.
- Kate indicated that that could be done with the current data set.
- Kevin asked if more information could be gathered regarding how access to benefits, and drivers schedules were determined.
- Kate mentioned that some of the data would be available through the district data requests and potentially additional questions in the driver survey that had not yet been analyzed.
- Robert was interested in understanding how many districts in the state completely outsource transportation.
- Kate mentioned that the district data would provide more clarity on that question.
- Susan also mentioned that she could provide a list of districts that were completely outsourced.
- Stephanie asked if the Task Force could be informed of which districts hadn't yet provided any information so that members could reach out to any of their available contacts to encourage districts to provide the needed information.
- Nicholas mentioned that he was curious to know how other states operate with regards to incentives, pay, staffing structure, etc.
- Kate asked the group whether they felt that recommendations needed to address ensuring that drivers were making a living wage and had access to affordable benefits.
- Nicholas, Trevor, and Daine all indicated that they felt that was needed.
- Chad suggested that PERA could be utilized as a way to offset incentives.
- Jana highlighted the need to think critically about how funding would be ensured to meet any proposed recommendations. She asked whether the recommendations should guarantee a livable wage if drivers were only working 4-6 hours a day. She also emphasized that there are additional employee positions such as TEAs, trainers, and schedules that were part of the larger transportation environment that would also need to be considered.
- Trevor pointed out that hours vary for drivers in a given district and are often available based on seniority.
- Kate pointed out that in situations like that it makes it extremely difficult to attract new talent if they are basically prevented from securing enough hours to make a livable wage.
- Kate proposed that the "Task Force move forward on ensuring a livable wage and expanding access to affordable benefits, finding ways to expand transportation in general while addressing demands on school finance. Additionally, defining what a livable wage means based on hours worked."
- A vote was taken. There was one 3, one 4, and the rest were 5s.

#### **Agenda Item #4- Next Steps**

- Kate reminded the group that the next meeting would be on Tuesday April 9th at 10AM.
- Kate indicated that the agenda and pre-reads for the meeting would be sent out the week before the meeting and encouraged Task Force members.
- Kate asked that if anyone in the group had materials they wished to share with the group that they be forwarded to herself and/or Susan.
- She reminded the group that the June meeting was being moved to June 11th due to scheduling conflicts with members of CDE.
- Kate thanked the Task Force members for attending and closed the meeting at 1:03pm