

TRB Workforce Summit – Building Capacity for States to Deliver on Infrastructure Knowledge Session

Wednesday, June 3, 2025 | 1:30-3:00p CT

Abstract / Problem Statement: The US is experiencing a historic level of investment from federal legislation that is spurring demand for infrastructure and construction workers in the US. This presents an incredible opportunity for states to deliver infrastructure projects that serve its residents. Yet, at the same time, states face increasing challenges with respect to the cost, quality, and speed of labor and capital inputs that may affect the on-time and on-budget delivery of major projects. E.g., according to AGC, nearly 9 out of 10 general contractors have a hard time filling craft positions and roughly 6 of 10 cite construction delays due to shortages of workers.

Overview of Panel: This panel has brought together thought leadership from the public and private sectors to highlight key trends and challenges state leaders face to deliver on infrastructure, including increasing labor shortages and wage pressures, material supply shortages, equipment scarcity, and supply chain disruptions. The panel will discuss recent initiatives to increase labor supply and improve productivity and operations to provide states a set of targeted actions that can help manage the challenges related to infrastructure investments and best deliver on their potential.

Moderator: Bryan K Pounds, McKinsey & Company, Public Transportation & Infrastructure Advisor

Participants: *Chris Young, PhD, TxDOT HR Director*
Kelly Hutchinson, NJDOT Asst. Commissioner
Keith Benjamin, VP, National Cities, STV

Session Discussion Question:

You are a state transportation agency Workforce Director with a Project Management Oversight (PMO) team responsible for labor capacity and upskilling. The COO has come to tell you that the state was just awarded a \$5M non-federal aid workforce grant from the Governor's office to align your agency's labor capacity with near/long term capital priorities, as a supplement to your recently completed Long Range Plan (you can decide what the Vision and priorities are). The \$5M is available for expenditure over the next two FY.

Your capital plan outlay is approximately ~\$1B /year, with the vast majority (75%) of capex historically being assigned to State of Good Repair of priority assets, of which your agency has achieved a 90% good/excellent condition on rating over the past decade.

However, ~30-40% of your agency's "in-house" asset mgmt. workforce is retiring within next decade. In addition, the Governor's office is keenly interested in leveraging this grant to explore integration of emerging technologies into Department operations and capital planning, and aligning skill sets that will support mode share for network users, with a focus on improving travel efficiencies and increasing safety.

Your task as the Workforce Director and PMO team is as follows:

1. **Choose what "type" of program investments are top priorities for the agency over the next 10-20 years (pick ~3-5 categories). Optional: Choose a one-sentence Long Range Plan vision statement – 5 minutes**
2. **Considering these priority investments, identify what kinds of labor and skills are needed (both internally and externally) to align with initiating and delivering these investments. – 10 minutes**
3. **Considering the priority investments, labor skills needed, and the current state of the agency's workforce (including upcoming retirement cliffs), develop a plan to present to the COO for leveraging the \$5M workforce grant over the next two FY. – 10 minutes**

Table read-outs (10 minutes): Tables will pick a representative their "Workforce Director" to read out their plan to implement the \$5M workforce grant.