Coaching and Mentoring LinkedIn Learnalong
January 9, 2026

Summary

National RTAP held its third LinkedIn Learnalong on January 9, 2026. The Coaching and Mentoring LinkedIn Learnalong was moderated by three experts from the Transit Workforce Center (TWC) who co-hosted it with us – Maurice Beard, Senior Workforce Development Advisor; Shayna Gleason, Senior Researcher; and Karitsa Holdzkom, Senior Policy Analyst; two members of the National RTAP Review Board – John Andoh, Redding Area Bus Authority Transit General Manager; and Stephanie Bushong, Transit Deputy Director for Ketchikan Gateway Borough; and Cara Marcus, Knowledge and Resource Manager, National RTAP.

The Learnalong concentrated on 4 short videos:

- To Coach, To Mentor, or Both
- Making a Positive Impact: GCRTA's Operator Mentoring Program
- Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District Mentorship Program
- Embracing the Power of Mentorship

Moderators led a discussion on the National RTAP LinkedIn page about applying these lessons to transit scenarios.

Participants included the following organizations, along with many other individuals that followed along:

- International Transportation Learning Center
- Ketchikan Gateway Borough
- National Transportation Library
- Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA)
- Southeast Vermont Transit
- Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT)
- Transit Workforce Center

There were over 532 impressions and 40 clicks, and many more in the following days afterwards.

Video 1: To Coach, To Mentor, or Both

Questions and Answers:

- Have you had a coach or mentor in your career and how have they helped you?
    - I've had both mentors and coaches at different points in my career. My mentors have each helped me see the bigger picture and believe in myself usually before I fully did. Coaches have helped me work through real, day-to-day challenges. What mattered most was knowing someone was genuinely invested in my growth. (Stephanie)
    - I had a coach through an APTA program that encouraged me to recognize the expertise and knowledge that I have and identified ways for me to grow. She also helped me advance in the company! (Karitsa)
    - Liz Taylor, former Assistant Director of National RTAP, was my amazing mentor on how to plan and conduct training and technical assistance for National RTAP. I still think of the lessons she gave me often. And our Executive Director, Robin Phillips, is an outstanding coach for our entire team! (Cara) Robin replied, "I hadn't thought about Coaching and mentoring as part of a management continuum. This was helpful as a framework for thinking about skill development with staff and for myself. I have had both coaches and mentors. I have needed help navigating new jobs and building new skills. Mentors are sometimes naturally occurring, but I think organizations can foster mentoring opportunities."
- Does your mentorship program also include partnerships with community colleges and universities?
    - There were linkages shown in a TWC case study between the mentorship/apprenticeship program and a local community college in the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District and ATU Local 1575 WIN partnership.
    - The program I belong to, the National Transportation Knowledge Network, does include partnerships with colleges and universities. Many State DOT Knowledge Managers also partner with educational organizations. It makes the mentorship program more robust and multi-dimensional. (Cara)
- Is there a targeted demographic group for participants in a mentorship program?
    - The most successful mentoring relationships come from a healthy collaboration between labor and management. Mentor programs benefit the Union, with fewer people quitting, so there is a more reliable stream of dues coming in, and the Agency, because work is covered and the public is better cared for. It's worth mentioning that operator and maintenance mentor programs can work at agencies of all sizes. Union or non-union. (Maurice)
    - New staff are an important group for mentoring and coaching programs, as well as those who need some extra help to bring them to their full potential. It could be beneficial to pair mentors/mentees who share the same primary language. (Cara)
    - Generally, the mentorship programs are for new employees, not focused on any particular demographic group. Some transit agencies opt to have a small group of mentors that act for the whole group of new operators during their first year. Others select 1 mentor per garage. There's no right or wrong way to do it! I would encourage you to reach out to us at TWC so we can work together to find the right model. (Karitsa)
    - Right now, our mentorship efforts are focused internally and mostly informally, making sure we're supporting and growing our people well. We'd absolutely like to build

partnerships over time with the university as well as our local high schools and vocational programs as part of creating stronger career pathways into transit. (Stephanie)

Additional Feedback on this Video/Topic:

Video 2: Making a Positive Impact: GCRTA's Operator Mentoring Program

Questions and Answers:

- GRTA has a whole Workforce Development department, and their program is very robust. How can a smaller transit agency implement similar mentoring initiatives?
    - For small agencies like Ketchikan Gateway Borough, mentoring doesn't have to be complex to be effective. They focus on pairing new hires with the right lead driver through onboarding and facilitate peer support and coaching along the way to build other relationships. As the agency grows, Stephanie would love to work more closely with the Transit Workforce Center to help formalize and strengthen that process.
    - Shayna definitely agrees, mentorship is not just for larger agencies and programs! For example, people might be interested in this writeup of mentoring in the paratransit setting.
- Were you surprised that this program resulted in 30% more operator retention? Has your agency measured results from coaching or mentoring?
    - Randy Schoonmaker, CEO of Southeast Vermont Transit, was not surprised and said that it looks like a great program.
    - Stephanie wasn't surprised to see the number, as she knows when people feel supported, they're more likely to stay. As a small agency, they don't formally measure retention tied to mentoring yet, but they see the impact in stronger relationships, increased confidence, low turnover and new hires making it through those early months.
    - Karitsa said that it sounds like it's highly customizable based on agency needs. Here are some examples from the Transit Workforce Center of how transit agencies have tracked metrics of success on their mentorship programs--including the Greater Cleveland RTA and ATU Local 268 partnership!
- What would be the quick high-level steps towards the establishment of a mentorship program?
    - The Transit Workforce Center offers an 8-hour Train-the-Mentor program, designed to provide mentors with an understanding of their role and equip them with the necessary tools to interact effectively with their mentees.

Video 3: Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District Mentorship Program

Questions and Answers:

- What is recruitment like for participants in the mentorship program?
    - Cara is a mentor in the National Transportation Knowledge Network, which is chaired by Rosalyn Alleman of the National Transportation Library. Rosalyn discusses the mentorship program at meetings for recruitment and also has a website with a form so members can sign up as mentors and/or mentees.
- Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District made time for specific "mentoring time". How can your agency make time for coaching and mentorship?

- Making time can be a challenge. Some agencies use a ride-along system whereby the Mentor can observe the Mentee and offer assistance. (Maurice) Stephanie answered, "This is our go to as a smaller agency!"

Video 4: Embracing the Power of Mentorship

Questions and Answers:

- How might a mentorship program work in your organization?
  - We have all been mentored at one point or another. There are people at your agency who take people under their wing and show them "how it's really done around here." The better move is to formalize and capture that message by selecting people who are reliable sources. (Maurice)
  - Since National RTAP is a technical assistance organization, rather than a transit agency, and they have a small staff, they can provide coaching through weekly team meetings and 1:1 mentoring through both formal and informal conversations.
- Rich became a mentor after being mentored. How can successful mentors and coaches guide their mentees to help others?
  - There are definitely people that off the bat might make better mentors than others, but training can helps! TWC offers a program that does just that.
- What more would you need to know about mentorship to figure out how to start a mentorship program in your organization? What kinds of resources would be helpful for you to explore starting a program?
  - For us, right now mentorship is more about culture than a formal program. It's making sure new hires as well as our more seasoned folks feel supported, know who they can go to, and aren't left to figure things out alone. It's simple, intentional, and built on relationships. (Stephanie)
  - Anyone interested should look to TWC for resources - https://www.transitworkforce.org/apprenticeship-and-mentorship/. Their team provides webinars and 1:1 technical support too.