

DRAFT BLOG POST

Fast Lane

Secretary Anthony R. Foxx

As another school year comes to a close, I would like to touch on an issue that is extremely important to me. As Secretary, I consistently meet extremely bright, eager young people – from grade school to college – who are passionate, resourceful, and ready to contribute to our society. However, opportunities to gain the critical skills needed to obtain jobs that pay good wages are too often elusive.

Consider these numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: only 51.9% of the nation's youth (ages 16-24) were employed in July 2014 – down from 58.3% ten years ago. The numbers are worse for youth from communities of color. Only 39.8% of African American youth and 47% of Hispanic youth had jobs in July 2014.

We have a responsibility to do something about this, and I believe transportation can play an important role in improving the employment landscape for young people nationwide.

Last week, I met with 20 transportation executives from across the country to discuss how we can introduce students between the ages of 16-20 to careers in transportation. The conversation was dynamic and insightful. They spoke of federal, state and local initiatives as well as private programs that have connected their organizations with intelligent, capable interns. Some of them were offered full-time employment or became leaders in their own right within those organizations.

Over the next ten years, over fifty percent of the transportation workforce will be eligible for retirement. This is why I believe it is critical that we work together to develop a skilled and diverse transportation workforce across a broad range of professional and skilled transportation careers: engineers, planners, construction workers, welders, truck drivers, pilots and others.

Not to mention, semi-skilled and skilled jobs in operations, maintenance and construction are in great demand today. Transportation jobs pay well, and most transportation jobs include strong benefits in addition to good wages.

I am proud to announce that I have directed the Department of Transportation to launch the *Ladders of Opportunity – The Future Workforce Initiative*. This summer, I am asking you to join me in an effort that I believe will make a genuine difference and introduce at least one student to transportation careers through jobs, internships, mentoring and/or career exploration activities. Interested in joining my call to action: INSERT

The next generation deserves a chance to prove itself. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together.