



*A bold voice for transportation workers*

## PREPARING THE TRANSPORTATION WORKFORCE TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In 2017 alone, 10,615 victims of human trafficking were identified by reports to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. When traveling, those victims may appear fearful, anxious, or submissive. They may show signs of physical abuse, exhaustion, or confinement; or simply present poor hygiene. Often, they will not handle their own travel documents and will avoid contact with other travelers or authorities. While these indicators of human trafficking may go unnoticed by the general public, well-trained transportation workers are in a powerful position to see what is hidden in plain sight.

There is a role for workers in every mode of transportation to play in combating human trafficking. That is why the leaders of TTD's 32 affiliate unions adopted a 2013 policy statement committing to join the fight against human trafficking. The statement highlighted new programs such as Transportation Leaders Against Human Trafficking and the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign that engage transportation labor in spreading awareness of human trafficking and learning to spot the signs.

Since then, TTD and our affiliates have endorsed, and Congress has passed legislation requiring flight attendants, customer service agents, and other airline workers whose jobs require regular interaction with passengers to undergo training to recognize and respond to suspected human trafficking cases. The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have developed awareness materials and training which can be distributed to transportation personnel. Specifically, the Blue Lightning training was developed in consultation with labor to prepare airline personnel. Despite this progress, however, plenty of work remains to be done.

Although the law requires certain aviation professionals to undergo training, it lacks specific guidance for what the training must cover. As a result, the training varies widely across carriers and lacks cohesion. Some air carriers spend a couple of Power Point slides on the topic, while others utilize the full 17-minute Blue Lightning training module developed by DHS. Some employers bring in outside organizations to train staff, while others simply distribute brief reference materials. Outside of aviation, organizations such as Amtrak have trained some but not all employees, and have done so with inconsistent curricula and without much regularity. DOT is currently developing a training tailored for the transit industry, but it is not yet available.

Transportation workers are ready and eager to fight against human trafficking, but need the tools and guidance to help. Beyond recognizing the indicators of human trafficking, workers should be prepared for smart and safe intervention. Well-trained transportation workers can discreetly utilize the DHS and National Human Trafficking hotlines to alert authorities and deploy support services

without tipping off traffickers and further endangering victims. The more transportation workers who have received thorough training, the more eyes we have in the skies and on the ground.

This past October, as mandated by the Combating Human Trafficking in Commercial Vehicles Act, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao appointed 15 members to serve on the Department's Advisory Committee on Human Trafficking. This summer, the committee will submit recommendations for identifying and reporting instances of human trafficking and effectively utilizing DOT resources in combating human trafficking. This Committee can only be effective if it provides comprehensive guidelines and standards across various transportation modes. Critically, any training and curricula must be implemented in consultation with, and in conjunction with labor unions representing transportation workers. That's why DOT and DHS should build on the work they've already done and apply the principles and format of Blue Lightning training to each mode of transportation. By incorporating the perspectives of frontline workers, the federal government can build a powerful tool in combating human trafficking.

Transportation labor leaders proudly stand together to reaffirm our commitment to end this exploitation. TTD's affiliate unions will work with the Committee to make sure transportation workers in every mode are armed with the tailored information, resources, and practical strategies necessary to recognize human trafficking when they see it and respond accordingly in ways that are fitting to their mode of transportation. Transportation workers are willing and able to see what the traveling public often doesn't. They just need to be armed with the right tools.

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