



A bold voice for transportation workers

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE ADDITIONAL STEPS TO ENSURE FEDERALLY SUPPORTED TRANSPORTATION JOBS ARE GOOD JOBS

The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), our 33 affiliated unions, and the broader labor movement have fought tirelessly over the past decades to ensure that federal investments made in America's transportation infrastructure are tied to strong policies that support and create good-paying jobs and safe work places for America's workers. Those policies include Davis-Bacon, Buy America(n) and other domestic content provisions, 13(c) transit protections, the Jones Act, Open Skies agreements, and Fly America. While protecting and expanding these provisions remains at the center of the work we do, there is an additional, important step that Congress should take to cement U.S. job creation in the transportation sector: amend the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) statutory purpose to include a mandate to create high-quality jobs.

Federal law (49 U.S. Code § 101) ensures that the U.S. Department of Transportation meets a number of specific objectives in the facilitation of fast, safe, and efficient freight, passenger, and personal transportation. While these objectives include labor as stakeholders, they also prioritize private-sector performance and building at the lowest cost, without consideration for the quality of jobs created. In doing so, these policies implicitly encourage the privatization of good, union public-sector jobs—a move that often results in lower pay and less desirable working conditions for the people performing them. We find this outcome contrary to the intent of Congress. After all, the above-mentioned labor policies, like Davis-Bacon and Buy America(n), are designed to protect and support working-class Americans. The Department's statutory mission should be consistent with the pro-labor policies that have long been at the core of our federal transportation programs.

Threats to good union jobs in the transportation sector—whether from the proliferation of new technology, including automation, or attacks on existing labor protections—are many and have the potential to disrupt millions of jobs in the coming years. However, there are steps we can take now to mitigate these concerns. Protecting the American workforce starts with ensuring good jobs remain central to every policy the DOT puts forward and worker voices are included in all decision-making that consults outside stakeholders.

This is not a new or radical idea. The Biden administration, for example, recently appointed a Director of Energy Jobs within the U.S. Department of Energy, with the goal of driving job growth in energy-related fields like electric vehicle manufacturing and charging infrastructure.

To accomplish this goal, TTD calls on Congress to amend 49 U.S. Code § 101(b) to include a new section, (7), with the stated statutory purpose of “increasing high-quality jobs and employment.” This simple step will enshrine within the department a sense that low-road labor models—whether it's the duplicitous use of fund-swapping to skirt Davis-Bacon and Buy America requirements, the use of independent contractors, or anti-competitive behavior from flags of convenience—are not supported by the department and are not a policy of the federal government.

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