

# **APEC Women in Transportation Forum**

## **DISCUSSION GROUP SUMMARY**

**U.S. Department of Transportation  
December 14, 2012**



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## INTRODUCTION

On December 14, 2012 sixty-five senior representatives from government, the private sector, associations and academia gathered at the U.S. Department of Transportation to discuss barriers to women's participation in the transportation industry and best practices for advancing the role of women in transportation across the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region.

During the forum, senior DOT leadership, including Secretary LaHood, Deputy Secretary John Porcari and Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs Susan Kurland, along with Department of Labor Women's Bureau Acting Director Latifa Lyles and APEC Transportation Working Group Lead Shepherd Arlene Turner, emphasized the importance of public-private collaboration to advance opportunities for women in transportation careers here in the U.S. and throughout APEC. A review of initial baseline data on women's participation in the APEC workforces and in transportation-related occupations, where available, helped frame the issue. However, speakers all emphasized the scarcity of data on the issue and the need to develop better mechanisms to collect data and track progress. A cross-sector panel shared perspectives on shifting trends in the transportation industry, continued challenges that women face and promising practices for creating expanded opportunities for women across transportation.

For the second portion of the forum, participants divided into small groups to discuss challenges, promising practices, tools and areas of opportunity in the APEC Women in Transportation's four pillar areas:

- **Education** – How do we ensure that information on the wide variety of opportunities in transportation reaches women and girls and how do we provide the training and education that will qualify them for jobs in transportation?
- **Access to Jobs** – What are the best ways to recruit more women and to ensure that they have equal access to job opportunities in transportation?
- **Retention** – Once we successfully engage women in transportation professions, how do we keep them in the field?
- **Leadership** – How do we remove barriers to women's advancement into the senior-most ranks of transportation leadership?

## SUMMARY

As a final question, each of the discussion groups was asked to highlight key actions that would drive change and create expanded opportunities for women in transportation. The ideas that groups shared in their final report-out summarized themes surfaced throughout the forum.

***“If you had a crystal ball, what is one thing that would accelerate opportunities for women in the transportation industry?”***

- ***Committing across sectors at the organizational leadership level to providing pathways***, peer support, processes and preparation for developing and advancing women through the ranks.
- ***Shifting cultural perceptions*** to the extent that routinely seeing women in leadership positions in transportation and other professions becomes the expectation and accepted norm.
- ***Harnessing the power of social media*** to better publicize the vast number of exciting career opportunities available to women in the transportation sector, as well as expanding networking possibilities for women already in the field.
- ***Identifying the right multiplier*** (e.g., messaging through trade shows, business associations, round tables, networking events, educational outreach, web and social media technologies, etc.) that translates agenda items into sustainable and actionable strategies that result in more women entering and advancing in transportation professions.
- ***Encouraging exposure and early entry to the transportation fields*** by current professionals making concerted outreach programs to secondary schools and university/vocational programs, as well as inviting students into the workplace.
- ***Expanding available networking opportunities*** among professionals in various transportation sectors and between those seeking to enter the field and those already working in transportation.
- ***Ensuring the consistent use of development plans*** for managers and employees to work together on professional development.
- ***Creating a transparent standard on what it takes to advance*** in a given transportation career field with gender equality.
- ***Developing sponsorship programs for women*** in addition to expanded mentoring experiences.
- ***Exploring scholarships, internships and professional exchange programs*** that offer cross-sector exposure and development opportunities to women transportation professionals in the U.S. and in partner APEC countries where both the participants and host organizations will benefit.
- ***Cataloguing best practices*** and expanding learning and sharing opportunities across the sector.
- ***Articulating the two-way value equation*** in terms of the value that women bring to transportation employers, as well as the benefits available to women in transportation careers.
- ***Promoting exposure to role models*** – women who have succeeded in their careers, as well as men who actively work to advance policies and practices.
- ***Including men in the dialogue and solution building*** for greatest progress on these issues.
- ***Centralizing information on available opportunities***, whether job shadows, internships, scholarships or new positions will create more of a market saturation that helps opportunities in transportation become better known and more attractive.
- ***Leveraging a stronger public-private partnership*** to influence policies and practices that provide long-term growth opportunities within the transportation industry and draw more women into the field.

## NEXT STEPS

Continuing the public-private dialogue and sharing of best practices is essential to advancing opportunities for women across the transportation industry. The APEC Women in Transportation Forum constituted the first in a series of stakeholder listening sessions. A second listening session that focuses more broadly on understanding challenges and best practices here in the U.S. across the continuum of transportation careers will be held in Washington, DC in early April.

The thoughts, experiences and ideas from these and additional listening sessions will contribute to discussions held at various regional meetings and APEC Transportation Working Group Sessions with other economies on strategies to strengthen role of women in transportation throughout APEC.

A special workshop on Women in Transportation with public and private sector participation will be held on the periphery of the September 2013 APEC Transportation Ministerial in Tokyo, Japan, with the goal of continuing to raise the issue's profile and collaborating across economies to advance women in transportation issues.

It is envisioned that ideas surfaced in listening sessions, APEC Transportation Working Group Meetings and the Women in Transportation workshop in Tokyo will lead to greater transportation industry collaboration on the development of new tools and approaches that result in expanded opportunities for women in transportation.

## APPENDIX: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARIES BY PILLAR FOCUS AREA

### EDUCATION

#### BEST PRACTICES

***Can you describe specific education and training strategies for girls and women that are working across both here in the US and/or in the APEC region?***

- The International Association of Ports and Harbors has a program designed for high school girls that brings the students to visit ports and explains what the port is all about. The program connects young girls with role models in the industry, such as the three women chair persons of California port boards, coast guard officers and other leaders.
- APTA has workforce development trainings where they bring high school students to the DC area for a week to study national transit.
- WTS creates modules for universities that help students understand what they should expect their workplace to look like. These modules include men and women.
- The U.S. DOT has a summer transportation institute program (not gender-specific) where funds are allocated funds to universities. Students are able to come in and have transportation professionals show them the ropes and the range of professions within the transportation sector.
- Federal Highways offers the Eisenhower fellowship to encourage young professionals to pursue graduate education in fields critical to transportation.
- DOT is making a serious commitment to developing the next generation of transportation professionals. It has announced \$72.5 million dollars of funding available to eligible non-profit institutions to establish University Transportation Centers.
- DOT has a relationship with multiple trade associations to try to bring more diversity into the industry through educational outreach.
- Getting into the schools early with engaging programs and professionals is critical. The DOT YES! Mentoring Program encourages DOT employees to volunteer in grade schools/high schools and work with students. This provides the students with exposure to positive role models and transportation career possibilities.
- It's important to bring in successful women to speak to girls. Outreach career days are not always effective because the focus is too general. The strategy should be engaging and also

better demonstrate the vastly diverse opportunities available in transportation in a way that does some myth-busting. For example, there's Lytana Kids' approach that engages students right away and helps reshape their perceptions, "What types of jobs do you think there are at UPS?"

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## CHALLENGES

***What challenges continue to surface for helping girls and women recognize transportation as a career choice? How are these challenges different in various geographic regions? What about for various aspects of the transportation industry?***

- A lot of the problems in helping women get excited about transportation as a career choice lies in a stale brand. Transportation needs to be shown as attractive. We should showcase the range of exciting options available and not just as blue collar jobs that readily come to mind for most of the public.
- In the transit industry women enter as drivers and can't move up the career ladder without college. Women who come into mid-level jobs with a college education can move up the ladder to higher levels faster. More needs to be done to help women in the workforce gain the education they need to progress.
- Transportation careers are not pitched enough to young women. More should be done to encourage STEM disciplines and to teach young women where it can take you career-wise.
- In APEC region there seems to be more successful women role models who are at a high level in the government sector than is the case in other Western countries. To get women interested in various aspects of the transportation industry, such as the auto industry, we need to target them with scholarships.
- It can be intimidating to get accepted into the transportation community. It is still a boy's club.

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## RE-ENTRY

***How can we give women wanting to re-enter the workforce the opportunity to learn about transportation careers?***

- Special seminars (web, in-person) could be created on how to stay current in the industry or on how to refresh your skillset. There should be an arsenal of tools that help bring women back up to speed and create a gateway for re-entry.
- Targeting re-entering women for job interviews is important to helping them gain the right exposure to learning about opportunities in transportation as they rejoin the workforce.



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## INFORMATION SHARING

### ***Are there transportation career exploration programs for girls and women that could be shared with countries across the APEC region? How can we best share information on lessons learned and successful practices?***

- The University of Denver has 40 companies that advise on how to shape educational programs. Some community colleges focus on training for certain industries. This program model could be expanded even more broadly to include more educational institutions and companies from the private sector.
- Industry doesn't offer training in the same way as it has in the past – there needs to be a greater investment in training and developing the right skill sets to fit the needs in transportation.
- There seems to be an expanding number of online “free universities.” These should be explored as a potential focus for training in applicable transportation career fields. If successful, this could be transferred to other APEC economies.

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## PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### ***What opportunities are present to partner with corporate social responsibility or other programs?***

- There are strong corporate social responsibility programs in India where companies work with vocational schools on identifying specific jobs for trainees, which is creating a pipeline of skilled labor.
- Transportation entities need to have international internship opportunities, exchanges, fellowships and scholarships, all of which could be funded through public-private partnerships.
- Both governments and the private sector can partner to collect better data to make solid business case for more women in workforce.
- Public-private partnerships can collaborate to provide better access to information regarding why it's important to have women in transportation industry and what career opportunities exist.

## ACCESS TO JOBS

***Are there best practices in the US or the APEC region that have been instrumental in recruiting and hiring women into specific types of transportation careers?***

- Europe has quotas and benchmarks for representation of women on boards, and some economies have them for hiring and recruiting, as well. This may need to be a practice until the culture shifts enough to where you don't need a mandate like that.
- Build a pipeline – recruiting starts early. Participate in HS job fairs and career days. Publicize non-traditional careers. Promote college students to attend professional conferences around the world (Women in Aviation, Women Engineers, Airport Minority Advisory Council – AMAC, etc.) .
- WTS chapters are empowered to reach out to schools to help advertise opportunities for women in transportation.
- Transportation YOU (WTS) brings young girls to DC to show them “20 cool jobs that you didn't know were transportation.” They girls get to meet with the Secretary. The Secretary tells them that when they're done with school, they need to come back and work at the Department – very motivational.
- Highways (DOT) seems to do a good job placing emphasis on opportunities for women – maybe they could include other modes.
- The key to selling women on transportation jobs early is through internships. We need to consolidate opportunities by creating a big resource list and finding a central place to post it. This would be a “one stop shop” for girls looking to explore transportation.
- Why couldn't we do a campaign like the military does to boost recruiting? Something like “Transportation will give you toughest job you've ever loved.”
- To encourage more applications from women, we need to ensure that recruiting efforts target websites used by women.
- Women in Aviation seems to be a very successful organization in getting women into the field. We need something like a broad “Women in Transportation” organization.
- We need to promote the visibility of the female presence in general within transportation.
- We need to put the innovation and freshness in the transportation section on display as part of rebranding what is traditionally thought of as transportation.
- Most women not attracted to this field because they didn't know that these jobs existed.

- Most transportation employees have a family member somewhere in transportation – that’s how they got in.
- A best practice would be better promotion of jobs in transportation. We need to raise awareness. For recruiting and hiring, we need to do a better job disseminating knowledge about the diverse jobs available.
- We especially need to do a better job with marketing the non-traditional transportation fields.
- One of the best ways to share information on jobs available would be to profile women working in diverse positions in transportation.
- It should be a requirement that women participate in all interview panels.

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#### AREAS WITH GREATER/LESSER SUCCESS

***What is your experience with women being recruited into the transportation industry? Are there examples of specific types of industry jobs where women are having better success?***

- It depends on the field. The problem is less that of attracting women than that of retention, especially in engineering positions.
- The experience with women in engineering is that they are trained and then they leave, generally to follow their husbands (CSSI). Also, there is a high demand for training women engineers, especially from the government, so sometimes they’re recruited away.
- (UPS) It seems to be particularly difficult to retain women in operations, often because the schedules disrupt work/life balance, so their departure is in response to imbalance.
- UPS hires more women in the Asian operations than in the U.S. because the women there prefer to work for U.S. companies. Barriers to women in management magnified in the Asian countries due to cultural barriers and barriers to university education.
- Women tend to have more success in HR, contract management, and administrative jobs in general, which are traditionally “women’s jobs.”

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#### CHALLENGES

***What challenges continue to surface for women across the transportation industry? How are these challenges different in various geographic regions? What about for various aspects of the transportation industry?***

- One of the biggest barriers to women is reaching them with the scope of opportunities available in transportation and then getting them in the door.
- It seems like most women fall into transportation careers by accident and then find a path forward. Like the DOT Deputy Chief of Staff said, “You’re not born a transportation professional—you become transportation professional.”
- Barriers begin with recruiting. Women are not always a specific recruiting target and transportation jobs are not discussed at career fairs (particularly not with modal variety or scope).

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ALIGNING EDUCATION AND RECRUITMENT

***How do you think we can better align industry with technical education programs, community colleges, four year degree programs and other training entities to create a stronger career pathway leading to job placement and acceptance?***

- Industry input into curriculum is vital; it keeps the education relevant to the jobs and better prepares professionals to enter the transportation workforce.
- When industry representatives visit campuses to present real-life problems from the transportation sector it engages students in finding solutions and in wanting to enter those career fields.
- The FAA has a university competition to identify problems and solutions to improve airports. Even working with middle school “future problem solvers” would help better align industry and education and access to jobs down the road.
- FAA also has centers of excellence with colleges.
- When students visit work sites of transportation sector companies, it gives them a better idea of what the profession is like, how to engage with those companies and what a career there could be like.
- One way to get women better access to jobs in transportation is to encourage college students to take part in professional associations.

- More internships at all levels and also scholarship programs would help industry and education be more aligned to the needs of the transportation sector and to preparing the right skill sets to fill those needs.
- Where possible, internship programs should have a mandate that make strong candidates eligible for jobs. This would be helpful in recruiting talent upfront.

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## HELPFUL TOOLS

### ***What tools and resources do you think would be helpful for the APEC region to assist with establishing better recruitment and hiring strategies for women?***

- A catalogue of best practices – something we could compile here in the U.S. and then distribute to the other economies for additions – would be a helpful start.
- Catalyst.org. is a group that works to advance issues affecting women in the workplace. This organization could be a great resource. It's worth reading their research series on [expanding work-life practices in Asia](#).
- It's vital that we set up metrics to track workforce participation and development – “What we measure actually happens.”

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## STRATEGIES FOR INFORMATION SHARING

### ***How can we best share information on lessons learned and successful practices?***

- Awareness of opportunities happens by creating profiles and getting career information into the right hands.
- Network access cannot be underestimated. We should do more with social media to encourage role models and internships and to reach a fast-paced, younger group of women linking social media to opportunities. Perhaps the creation of a “click on your zip code to see opportunities in your community” link would be helpful.
- We should partner with the U.S. Department of Labor to add a link to their site on helping women advance in transportation careers.
- Creating a collaborative workspace where we could continue these conversations and build tools would further progress on the issues.

- The perceptions, observations and challenges regarding women’s participation in transportation seem to cut across sectors. Gatherings such as this help surface common issues and public-private solutions that benefit all.

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## PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### ***What opportunities are present to partner with corporate social responsibility or other programs?***

- To build businesses, you need to demonstrate that fostering opportunities for women in your transportation field is important to you, and that’s a commitment that comes with funding behind it.

## RETENTION

### BEST PRACTICES

***Can you describe specific strategies that are working across both here in the US and/or in the APEC region that lead to women staying in the transportation field?***

- Women in Aviation is a good example of a network for women that crosses sector lines to bring together a government and industry group of women together to discuss issues and to promote collaboration, as well as offer a support network for women in the field.
- Success starts when women are able to have freedom to have personal engagements. Delta offers a number of tools to blend work and personal environments, such as on-site shopping, medical facilities, day care, gyms, etc.
- At APEC meetings, a large amount of women are represented, but they are coming from the government sector. Government has a role to play in advancing the same principles in private industry.
- Advancing sponsorship should be part of a company agenda. Tools like sponsorship create viable pathways for progression.
- Business roundtables on diversifying workforces within companies could be a good forum for developing strategies to engage more women.
- Social media brings enormous potential – people are talking with each other. We must think about how we can use this tool to garner visibility for women in transportation and the surrounding issues, as well as leverage networking opportunities. Sharing challenges and positive impact would encourage more women to stay in the field.
- Developing a sense of community and making a genuine effort to work with people and to learn from them makes a huge difference.
- The value of networking opportunities should be kept at the forefront of thoughts on how to best to retain women in the transportation industry.

***As we succeed in bringing more women into the transportation industry, can you highlight best practices for retaining women in both technical and professional transportation careers?***

- Mentoring networks connect women to each other and to the organization. Networking also helps women share their stories and learn from their peers.
- Clearly defined opportunities for advancement and professional development keep women in the organizations.
- Sponsors promoting women would help diversify leadership ranks.
- Workplaces that offer flexible work schedules to better blend work and life balances attract women for longer career durations.

***What are best practices in the US and in the APEC region for helping women continue to maintain certifications and access advanced training to enhance their skills? How can we best share information on lessons learned and successful practices?***

- Organizations should provide a variety of flexible opportunities to garner additional skills, knowledge and abilities.
- Social media is a huge driver for the future, both in terms of tools for helping women network and stay in the field, and also in terms of sharing promising practices.

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AREAS WITH GREATER/LESSER SUCCESS

***Are there examples of specific types of industry jobs where women are having better success? What opportunities are currently available either in the US or other regions of APEC that could give “lift” to women working in our industry?***

- Aviation seems to be one of the most well developed fields in terms of variety of opportunities for women and their advancement, as well as the strength of their professional associations.
- In transportation, it seems that administrative jobs, dispatchers, HR and public and government affairs often have a lot of women, with fewer women in operational jobs.
- It seems that there has been an increase in mid-level management roles for women.
- Government is doing better than the private sector in terms of the number of women in senior leadership positions. Governments should highlight this more to drive change.



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## CHALLENGES

***What challenges continue to surface for women working in transportation careers? How are these challenges different in various geographic regions? What about for various aspects of the transportation industry?***

- Given the difficulty of advancing and the seeming scarcity of senior positions for women, women are in competition with each other. Very few women are helping each other in industry. We need to work together to build success. How do we get women to work with each other to improve women’s participation in the transportation industry?
- Information on associations and opportunities that exist for women is not publicized well enough, particularly in less urban contexts.
- Lack of solid data disaggregated by mode obscures the issue that there are not enough women in the transportation workforce, that retention is not where it should be and that there are not enough women in leadership positions.
- Younger women have different career expectations and often enter not knowing there is a “ceiling.”
- The professional growth path for women takes longer than it does for men.
- Women are not being pulled up through the ranks or promoted from within.
- Even though mentoring programs exist in some organizations, there are not enough mentoring opportunities that could help retain a female workforce.
- Mentorship programs in corporations are not working for women in terms of keeping them in the transportation sector and seeing them reach the highest levels of leadership. The glass ceiling still exists in practice – perhaps it’s mentoring in name only?

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## HELPFUL TOOLS

***What tools and resources do you think would be helpful for the APEC region to promote effective practices for helping women continue to work in technical and professional positions over time?***

- More advanced training opportunities for women in the technical trades would be helpful here in the U.S. and perhaps in other APEC countries.
- Access to senior leadership goes a long way to ensuring good retention.
- Across countries mentoring and leadership development tools should be in place, along with transparent and equal opportunities for advancement.
- Employees need tools that help them take ownership for their career.
- More tools that foster generational understanding where more and less experienced women transportation professionals can learn from each other are needed.
- We need better data across APEC economies, particularly in the area of retention.
- Tools and programs that groom and promote women from within should be in place to foster better retention.
- Development profiles within the company or organization would help – steps for advancing would be outlined and others would be aware of development goals to offer support.

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## PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

***What opportunities are present to partner with corporate social responsibility or other programs?***

- There are aviation awareness programs that targets first through fifth graders and are available to teachers.
- The National Business Aviation Association also provides opportunities for education and outreach, as well as partnerships with industry.

## LEADERSHIP

### BEST PRACTICES

***As we succeed in bringing more women into the transportation industry, can you highlight best practices for promoting women into leadership roles? How are companies and organizations preparing women for leadership positions both here in the US and in the APEC region?***

- Boeing created affinity groups as a networking opportunity for females (generational). 50% of population is about to retire. The big gap is ages 35-50. There is a large number of generation Xers. Affinity groups with younger women and minority affinity groups use their ideas to generate ideas about what works in the company.
- There are some tactical programs that are preparing leadership in public transportation, such as five-year workforce plans that target youth/higher education, partner with organizations to advertise career opportunities and attract talent, encourage professional development through web-based programs and other coursework or on-the-job training and measure progress against stated objectives.
- Talent development programs where, for example, 250 employees pulled out and recognized to participate in the leadership programs, seem to be making a difference in developing transportation industry leaders of the future.
- To move into senior leadership, women need sponsors that are men. This sponsor should take responsibility for the woman's career development, network her and advocate for her.
- Sponsorship, flexible work environments and re-entry strategies need to be incorporated.

### AREAS OF GREATER/LESSER SUCCESS

***Are there examples of specific segments of the transportation industry where women are having better success? What opportunities are currently available either in the US or other regions of APEC that could give "lift" to women working in our industry?***

- It seems that occupations, such as program management, are thriving.
- Women are doing better in manufacturing and engineering, but there's still a long way to go.

- More targeted engagement in terms of profiles and talking about women’s engagement and participation is working. There is a strong need for mentors that can relate.

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## CHALLENGES

### ***What leadership challenges continue to surface for women across the transportation industry? How are these challenges different in various geographic regions? What about for various aspects of the transportation industry?***

- The big question is do you need the technical background to actually become a senior executive, or is it really more about the management skills and leading people? And if that is the case, how do we enforce that standard across transportation?
- MEMA represents thousands of companies, but has a very small board and almost never any representation from women. A bigger board and women board members would be of benefit.
- There’s still a skill gap in the entry levels, which if those positions can’t be filled, it makes it hard to have a strong leadership pipeline. We need to put more emphasis on training programs that prepare the types of skilled labor in greatest demand and in least supply.
- Most of the APEC technical training seems to be focused on the auto industry – need more diversification and awareness of opportunities to create stronger leadership pipelines.
- In order to solve challenges, we need to study more closely what works. We need to drill down to know why things are working, and once we have a sense of the whys, we can put more solutions in place.

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## STRATEGIES FOR INFORMATION SHARING

### ***How can we best share information on lessons learned and successful practices?***

- Create simple and easily accessible best practice and lessons learned resources that are personal or about real women in real job experiences.
- Consider use of celebrity sponsors in different regions to raise the issue’s profile.
- Look at the virtually untapped networking through business associations.
- Determine what drivers could push these issues forward. Events drive deadlines, and deadlines drive organizational efforts.

- Establish a strategic calendar that looks at events and identifies the right mechanism to have a multiplier effect. For example, trade shows are well-attended with many women attending. The trade shows always set-up a website that has events, and there is a great opportunity for the manufacturing sector to utilize this as an outreach instrument.

**Examples of strong practices in information sharing:**

- APTA has a biweekly publication where they profile members. They've had more of a focus on younger people and women. They created two-minute videos where these featured members talk about their job. More video technology should be applied in the work we're doing.
- APTA's lessons learned focus on making informational platforms simple and accessible and on connecting the dots.
- Department of State took all organizations that sponsor entrepreneurs overseas for knowledge transfer.
- APTA is going to have a document that is from Rutgers that profiles 170 jobs in public transportation (FTA provided some funding) – currently waiting for the official blessing on the new posters and flyers, etc., but this will be a great informational resource.

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PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

***What opportunities are present to partner with corporate social responsibility or other programs?***

- Boeing has a strong STEM education program with local schools in China (even something as simple as paper plane engineering side-by-side can be powerful).
- State has a Global CSR team that travels to embassies and gives an award every year to expose good CSR programs.
- Perhaps more could be done to transfer executive management programs to the APEC economies. An exchange program with internships in U.S. corporations or government agencies would be valuable.
- Not enough has been done under CSR, but as this issue moves forward, women's participation belongs on the business agenda, and not on the CSR agenda.