

December 2015: Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Board

Letter from Nancy Dischnat

CDL Transportation Roundtable, Driving to Close the CDL Gap

The Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Board, Inc. recently completed a comprehensive study with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation and Oxford Economics called Bridging the Workforce Gap stating that the Lehigh Valley will add 22,150 new jobs over the next five years. The Transportation and Warehousing sector will be adding 3,700 or 17% of these new jobs. Right this minute in the Lehigh Valley, employers report that they need 1,128 heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers! Nationally the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the number of truck driver occupations at 2.8 million.

Even before the study was complete, PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley, our workforce system, directed resources of \$396,380 in one year to train 86 individuals in Commercial Driver's License training and provide training support for physicals, permits and fees. The Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Board is dancing as fast as they can to bridge the transportation industry gap, but industry needs to step into this growing workforce issue.

More than 60 commercial truck and transportation employers were invited to a CDL Transportation Roundtable sponsored by Lehigh Valley Workforce Development Board and the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce on October 27th at PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley. The Roundtable brought together employers, representatives of workforce and economic development, and education and training providers to discuss marketing job opportunities in the transportation sector and what we need to do to attract, recruit and retain workers. Legislative staff led a discussion with employers on regulations and legislation that impact the industry. The outcome of the Roundtable provided clear expectations of transportation jobs, the need for increased hands-on work experience, development of a pipeline that increases career pathways in this sector, continued alignment of training curricula based on industry standards, and the agreement of employers to participate in strategies to close the gap.

Several employers offered solutions to bridge the CDL gap like Bob Dolan, representing Con-way Freight and the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association, who offered to work on a day-in-the-life video for job seekers. Many of the 60 transportation industry leaders agreed to work with community colleges, career and technical schools and private training providers like McCann School to provide career awareness opportunities for students and to promote the industry as a sector strategy.

This Roundtable was first in a series and is a culmination of phase one of bridging the CDL transportation gap. If you want to be part of the solution to close the gap, please contact me at ndischnat@lvwib.org.