

**Mid-South CDL Talent Council Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 18, 2016**  
**Memphis Chamber of Commerce**  
**Meeting Notes**

**Attendees**

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***Companies***

- Bobbie Abram, MATA
- Crege Carter, Swift Transportation
- Wayne Elliott, Schneider
- E.J. Gonda, Mallory Alexander
- John Hodge, FedEx
- Stuart Leslie, Vaco
- Susan Schubert, MATA
- Chris Spence, New Growth Group
- Anita Victory, Averritt
- Tommy Wilson, Ozark Motor Lines

***Staff***

***GMACW***

- Latanyua Robinson

***Greater Memphis Chamber***

- Anita Brackin

***Workforce Resources***

***ASU Mid-South***

- Alex Lamm

***Southwest Tennessee Comm. College***

- Chris Ezell

***TCAT***

- Andy Helms
- Lynn Rimes

***University of Memphis***

- Shepherd Tate

***Workforce Investment Network***

- Henry Lewis
- Melanie Winfield

***Guests***

***The Manufacturing Institute***

- Katherine McClelland

***Thomas P. Miller and Associates***

- Sara Hunt

## Introductions

- Anita Brackin provided information about the Memphis Chamber, including that it is here to support the development of talent for their companies, but also support with other services like with pothole services
- Anita also informed the group on the Greater Alliance for a Competitive Workforce (GMACW), which is a true alliance in bringing together employers to support their talent needs, working with education and industry to ensure that employer's talent needs are met. GMACW is tasked with looking at how potential shortages and skills gaps may be affecting companies in the region and how regional education systems can be leveraged to help meet demand
  - Sector councils were initiated based off of the recommendations of the [Brookings Focus Report: A Roadmap for Transforming the Metro Memphis Economy](#), and the alignment of the GMACW partner schools to better meet the talent needs of the high demand regional sectors
  - The four councils include Process Technology, Steel Fabrication, Diesel Technology, and CDL

## The Regional Skills Gap

- Katherine McClelland from The Manufacturing Institute presented on the labor market trends in the sector highlighting the current and projected skills gap in Diesel Technology. This included nine county Memphis region information on:
  - Industry demand over the 10 year period by county, comparing the region to national trends
  - Average yearly earnings
  - Gender breakdown in the Mid-South region in CDL
  - Steps to close the skills gap, including perceptions
  - Best practices in CDL training

## University of Memphis Southeast Transportation Workforce Center

- Stephanie S. Ivey, PhD from the University of Memphis provided an overview of their work on [Job Priorities and Needs Report Phase 1: Southeast Region](#) and additional information on the Southeast Transportation Workforce Center, which is part of National Network for

Transportation, funded out of the Department of Transportation. They are looking at a larger, national picture with the report and their work, but also work with the local school systems.

- Their areas of expertise are women, vets, freight and logistics. Addressing the issue of changing the perception and awareness of career opportunities is the first goal.
- They also recently released a [Phase 2 Summary](#), which focuses on women in transportation, freight (including distribution and logistics), and military transition to the transportation workforce

### New Growth

- Chris Spence from New Growth Group presented on CDL programs and best practices from around the country that may be options for replication in the Mid-South Region
- Program models, successes and challenges were featured from Hinds Community College, St. Louis Community College, Cincinnati State C & TC, L&C Community College, and College of the Ouachitas
- Best practices from these models included:
  - 3 or 4 students per truck/instructor for all of the programs
  - Having the programs be Pell Eligible is a common theme of high quality programs – helps to significantly reduce the costs to the students
  - Program donations from the local or regional employers
  - Retention coaches for the companies and the schools
  - Employer partnerships and pre-screening where employees sign a 1-year contract
  - On the road financial management, relationship management – with the company and at home

### GMACW Academic Program Information

- Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) enrollment is currently at about 60 students per year, over 2 years have had 100% graduation rate and placement into 90% rate
  - The program is 3 to 6 months in length and the average age of the student is in the 30's, with many career changers
- Southwest and ASU Mid-South do not currently offer CDL programs but are considering adding in programs
  - Southwest has had 3 high schools come to them in the last month asking about bringing in a CDL program and providing career information for the high schools
- Schools face the challenge of recruiting students because are unaware of opportunities in this sector

## Common Themes from Employers

### *Academic program recommendations*

- Employers expressed support for for-credit academic programs, saying one of the best retention strategies is to provide a roadmap for employees careers after truck driving and also great for parents who have the idea that their child should eventually go to college
- Technology is a common theme, with employers looking for a solid base of technology in the academic program, saying computer literacy is an important aspect because of the incorporation of E-Logs
- Preparing and exposing students the lifestyle of long-range vs. regional or local drivers could start happening at the academic level so they are prepared at the time of employment
- Academic pathways should incorporate endorsements employers are looking for prior to leaving the academic setting so that they do not have to go back and get them after they receive the CDL licenses
- Employers are looking for a robust academic program, including a focus on safety, employability skills professionalism for drivers, especially those that are interacting with people on a daily basis, and a larger technology component
- They would like to see CDL included in the curriculum for mechanics *Council value and opportunities*
- Employers agreed that the value of the council is having company support to bring the knowledge of occupations in the area to the academic programs
- They would like to see promotion of Women in Trucking for advocacy within the industry and promotion of career paths
- They would like the Council to help promote the diversity within the industry itself and the opportunities for a different options in driving long range vs. local only as well as looking at niche markets and communities for outreach, including LGBT, immigrants, veterans

### *Common concerns*

- There is a regional issue with students being steered toward four-year college
- Lifestyle is the largest issue many employers face with getting employees to stay in the industry, and often face cycles of people leaving the industry instead of going to another company

### *Biggest needs*

- Many employers said their average age is 52-55, much higher than the high school level, so they need to figure out how to recruit for those changing careers or getting a second career
  - This much more pronounced with women as well looking for a second career or even first career

- Change the perception of CDL to become an entry level position where it can grow years down the road into management

#### *Best practices*

- Swift has had success recruiting from people coming back from the oil field as well as veterans
- Advancing internally from drivers, showing what the lifestyle is going to be like but then also opportunities for promotion and advancement
- Promote having students do online courses in the evening for long-range trucking
  - West Kentucky CC has an online logistics program for groups on the road so that they can advance their education while working

#### Decisions and Recommendations for moving forward

- Wayne Elliott was selected to Chair the Council and E.J. Gonda will serve as Vice Chair
- Employers asked each other to think about what they can provide to schools, such as log books or trailers
- The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 7, 2017
- Employers were asked to share with GMACW the technology they are using to communicate with the drivers and what endorsements the employers are all seeking to incorporate that into academic programs