

**Women of Trucking Advisory Board**  
**Task 23-1: Barriers and Trends Impacting Women Minority Groups and Women Who**  
**Live in Rural, Suburban, or Urban Areas**  
**Discussion Notes from May 16, 2023, WOTAB Meeting**

*Task 23-1: FMCSA asks that the Women of Trucking Advisory Board (WOTAB) provide feedback regarding the barriers and trends that impact women minority groups and women who live in rural, suburban, or urban areas, particularly drivers of commercial motor vehicles (CMV), and ways to remove these barriers and ensure positive trends.*

**I. Task 23-1 Discussion**

- A. Challenges that minority women and women from rural, suburban, and urban areas have that create barriers to their selection as CMV drivers, and the appeal of becoming and remaining a CMV driver.
1. Attracting women to the trucking industry is a marketing issue.
    - a. Let women know that trucking is a profitable career and an available opportunity.
    - b. Commonly held perceptions of the trucking industry prevent women from becoming interested in joining the industry.
  2. The lack of childcare resources is a major challenge for women.
  3. Drivers do not have ability to bring animals with them in the cab; the lack of pet care is a barrier to training.
  4. There is a lack of paid training opportunities; start-up costs are a barrier.
  5. There is a lack of transportation to training schools in rural areas (the closest schools can sometimes be 45-60 minutes away).
  6. There is a lack of resources and education in under-represented communities:
    - a. The African-American community is one of the most under-represented and under-supported groups in the trucking industry; this community needs additional life supports (childcare, etc.) and resources to support their transition into trucking.
    - b. Many drivers join the industry without knowledge of FMCSA programs like the Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse.
      - i. Many drivers do not understand or are not aware of Federal requirements for CMV drivers.
      - ii. For example, many drivers do not understand that test refusals (not just positive test results) result in a Clearinghouse violation.
  7. There is a lack of available mentorships for women.
  8. The lack of funding and educational opportunities for women causes many women to leave the industry.
    - a. Provide more funding/scholarship opportunities to younger women and mothers to attract them to the industry.
    - b. Develop more support structures to allow women to engage in the industry.

- B. Existing barriers and trends that deter or prevent minority women and women from rural, suburban, and urban areas from entering and remaining in the field of trucking or motorcoach operation.
1. There is a lack of trainers; many male drivers refuse to train women drivers.
    - a. Many drivers wait a long time for trainers to become available; this delay is holding them back from joining carriers and getting on the road.
    - b. Carriers force trainees to participate in longer hours/miles because the market is down.
      - i. It now takes drivers longer to complete their training.
      - ii. Sometimes women drivers cannot visit home or see their children for up to six months.
    - c. Many training schools take advantage of new drivers and do not set them up for success.
      - i. Trucking companies and training schools need to lay out their processes and standards for training so that drivers know what education they will receive and what will happen after training.
      - ii. For example, student drivers finish school not knowing how to hitch trailers, open doors, check hooks, or hook up air hoses. This is a public safety issue.
    - d. Grant funding is an issue because some training companies misuse funds, to the detriment of drivers.
  2. Driver retention:
    - a. There is a need to recognize, promote, and encourage women to join the industry.
    - b. There need to be better opportunities for advancement.
      - i. Experienced drivers should be able to become managers or trainers. Advancements should be tied to experience, rather than to degree qualifications.
      - ii. The criteria for experienced driving should include having no incidents and a good safety record.
  3. There is a lack of flexible schedules/jobs.
  4. There is a lack of mental health resources.
  5. There is a lack of training in how to cope with day-to-day driving situations (vehicle breakdowns; etc.).
- C. Best practices for dismantling the barriers and ensuring positive trends for minority women and women from rural, suburban, and urban areas.
1. Increase remote CDL training opportunities so that more women can participate.
  2. Increase the number of funding opportunities available to women.
  3. Share more success stories of women from minority communities who are leaders in the industry.
  4. Clarify the requirements of the job to battle misperceptions (relieve fears around false beliefs that truck drivers must unload freight by themselves, etc.).

- D. Best practices for how industry, stakeholders, and others can create a workplace environment that supports the recruitment and retention of women drivers.
1. Develop more mentorship opportunities for women throughout the industry.
    - a. Develop certification programs for mentoring women in trucking.
      - i. Allow for online certification, as well as for certification during in-person trucking conferences (3-day workshops).
      - ii. Help women drivers develop resumes so they can advance to safety instructor, manager, or dispatcher roles.
      - iii. Mentors should have first-hand experience as drivers and have empathy for their driver mentees. This is important to help driver mentees know that someone understands the demands of the field, help them feel supported, and help keep them in the industry.
      - iv. Mentors should establish processes to support drivers as needed and help them navigate career advancement.
  2. View drivers as leaders of the industry, not as an entry-level position into trucking.
    - a. Define what growth opportunities look like.
    - b. Highlight and promote advancement.
      - i. Create a campaign to highlight the benefits of being a driver and to show options besides being behind-the-wheel.
      - ii. Use Motorcoach Association's "Why I Love Driving" campaign as an example.
      - iii. Make the same training opportunities available for professional drivers who would like to have a dual role or to try something different in the industry (e.g., moving to technical roles).
  3. Humanize the people behind the wheel to bring the professionalism back to driving.
  4. Create a van service to help women in rural areas get to training centers.
  5. Encourage companies to create an environment of family support for drivers.
  6. Improve access to capital. Provide more access to grants to pay for training/education, childcare, transportation, opportunity funds (e.g., down payment assistance to help women purchase their first CMV).
    - a. How can information about available funding be shared with those who would benefit?
    - b. Increased funding for smaller trucking schools could allow women to stay local, go home each night, and lower overall childcare and eldercare expenses.
    - c. Make USDOT funding available to promote an online/remote training environment in order to enable more women to participate.
  7. Use technological advancements to create space for women in trucking.
    - a. Allow CDL holders to have experience with autonomous vehicles (AV):
      - i. Women are more apt to be the "safety beacon" in the industry.
      - ii. Giving women more experience and education with AVs will help attract women to the industry and advance their careers.

- iii. The industry needs more mechanics; women have the opportunity to fulfill this need and to advance their careers by working on AVs.
- iv. If AVs can be operated remotely, women would have more opportunity to balance work/life needs.
- v. New technology is creating new opportunities and attracting more women to trucking.
- vi. Create a separate subcommittee to examine the safety impacts of AVs.
- b. Driver-facing cameras pose an issue for retention.
  - i. Many drivers consider driver-facing cameras to be a privacy issue, which may lead many women to quit the industry.
  - ii. Many drivers consider cabs to be their “second home”; cameras can feel like an invasion of privacy.
  - iii. All stakeholders need to be mindful and informed about privacy parameters.
  - iv. Companies that implement the camera technology need to provide education and disclosures to drivers; driver-facing cameras can be good for accountability and keeping drivers safe (e.g., provide back-up if there are incidents).
  - v. Humanize drivers: Companies must work to understand driver concerns about technologies, assuage those concerns, and provide requested information.
- 8. Provide training so that women receive the emotional, social, and psychological support they need on the road (e.g., when experiencing vehicle breakdowns, etc.)
- 9. Explore the barriers to women for becoming trainers in the industry.
- 10. Offer more flexible/local and “final mile” work arrangements.

## **II. Key Recommendations**

- A. Develop an accountability process for bad actors (e.g., poor training programs, others taking advantage of established systems).
  - 1. For example, training programs should have a score card, and their students should be taking in-person skills tests (not simulated skills tests).
  - 2. FMCSA should enforce and implement skills tests to ensure that new drivers know the required material and can perform the necessary skills to be safe on the road.
  - 3. FMCSA should develop a standardize set of goals that all training providers must accomplish with their students.
    - a. Standardize all training materials.
  - 4. Require inward-facing cameras in training cabs.
- B. The FMCSA Hotline (also recommended as part of Task 22-1) needs to have structured support for women who report problems on the road.
  - 1. Add the Hotline information to the fuel pumps at truck stops, not just on billboards. Post the Hotline information where women can see it at an earlier

- point (instead of only posting it in restrooms, where many of the reported incidents occur).
- 2. Encourage bystanders to “see something, say something.”
- C. Provide women drivers with body cameras that they can use in situations where they feel uncomfortable.
- D. Develop training surveys to help companies improve training and provide FMCSA with those datasets to help inform the Agency’s understanding of the industry’s overall retention trends.
  - 1. Conduct surveys both while drivers are in training, and after they leave training.
  - 2. Track the drivers’ career paths (are they staying in the industry or leaving?).
  - 3. Develop individual surveys to understand women’s experience and interest in the industry and use the resulting data to help attract others to the industry.
- E. Execute an outreach campaign that is focused on dismantling stereotypes/correcting misperceptions (e.g., that truckers need to be “brawny” or have a certain body type) and sharing the benefits of joining the industry in order to attract more women drivers to the industry.
- F. Add mental health resources to the FMCSA website to let women know about the resources that are available to support them.
  - 1. Encourage more companies to provide mental health resources and support to employees.
  - 2. There needs to be more training on psychological safety and wellness; many drivers search for resources outside of their employer (EAP program).
  - 3. Help to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health assistance.
  - 4. Help women understand which prescribed medications might cause Clearinghouse violations (such as anti-anxiety medications). Encourage women to consult with their medical provider about which medications are safe to take when operating CMVs or performing other safety-sensitive functions.
- G. Create resources to help people understand the material in the CDL manuals.
- H. Allocate more funding to minority CDL schools to ensure that minority leaders are supported and can help more students enter the industry.
  - 1. Provide funding to bring childcare and CDL schools together.
  - 2. Promote existing funding options and scholarships to wider audiences.
- I. Develop an accessible “women of trucking” portal on the FMCSA website or an app that includes grant information, training information, association resources, mental health resources, etc. as a “one-stop shop.”
  - 1. Be explicit that “women” includes trans women.
  - 2. This portal should include grant information (State, Federal, etc.) and how to apply for those grants.
- J. Create a roadmap for those who enter the field. The roadmap should outline steps for training, testing, and the overall scope of career (what women can expect).
  - 1. Incorporate positive information about the goals and benefits of a trucking career and show people that it is worth the hassle to become a truck driver.
  - 2. Develop training modules to include this “roadmap” information.

- K. FMCSA should develop a nationwide, women-focused career fair to educate and welcome women into the industry.
  - 1. Partner with local school districts to provide exposure to trucking to community members. These fairs are usually free to attend.

### **III. Information Requests to Support Future WOTAB Discussions**

- A. Invite FMCSA representatives from the Research and Safety offices to discuss available data at an upcoming WOTAB meeting.
  - 1. Show WOTAB where to find public statistics on FMCSA or other USDOT websites (funding opportunities, number of women with CDLs or who are in CDL school, age breakdown of CMV drivers, crash data, etc.) to aid analysis of women in trucking and trucking in general.
  - 2. Share driver data from the Clearinghouse.
- B. FMCSA should allow WOTAB to discuss human trafficking and give WOTAB the option of providing related recommendations.