



## **WOTAB Task 23-2: Ways to Expand Existing Opportunities for Women in the Trucking Industry**

*Task 23-2: FMCSA asks that the Women of Trucking Advisory Board (WOTAB) provide feedback to the Agency regarding existing opportunities for women in the trucking and motorcoach industries and how to expand them.*

### **I. Existing opportunities for women in the trucking and motorcoach industries to improve recruitment, training, and retention.**

#### **A. Programs and initiatives**

1. Women of Trucking Advisory Board (WOTAB) should promote an apprenticeship model, make access to program funding available, and conduct outreach to targeted audiences.
  - a. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Safe-Driver Apprentice Initiative viewed as unsuccessful due to low recruiting numbers.
  - b. Outreach issues suggested as reason behind low numbers.
2. Members suggested Commercial Driver's License (CDL) schools be prioritized.
3. Training/adoption of e-vehicles noted as pathway for future careers.
4. A WOTAB member highlighted a reporting mechanism that creates a sense of trust for drivers, while also improving workplace safety.
5. WOTAB members suggest creating an initiative like the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program.
6. Noteworthy industry organizations/events: Trucking Moving America Forward; TruckersFund.org; National Truck Driver Appreciation; State activities and in-person events; Veteran programs; Appreciation Week; Real Women in Trucking; CalStart and Prime Diamond Drivers.
  - a. Prime Diamond Drivers program demonstrated successful female recruitment and retention thanks to training and specific programs for women.
  - b. Positive feedback from Prime training referenced peer-based learning, food and amenities, and access to female trainers.
7. Increased safety leads to better recruitment and retention.
8. The Teamsters Mental Health hotline and its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) could provide a template for similar national initiatives.
9. WOTAB members recommend using social media to promote trucking and the profession as an asset, not a liability.
10. Retention of new drivers deserves increased focus.
  - a. Female drivers are currently denied same opportunities as men in similar roles.
  - b. The application process overwhelms many potential new drivers.

#### **B. Topics of Concern**

1. There is not enough awareness of companies that are not major carriers.
2. WOTAB seeks more information on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI).
  - a. Suggestion made to review Karen Levy's published work on this topic.

- b. Inquiries about AI's impact on industry recruitment highlights the need to communicate career stability.
3. Personal experience on harassment during training noted.
4. Lack of support leads to family life conflicting with driving career.
5. Limited financial support for CDL applicants creates a barrier to the industry.
6. CDL manual needs to be updated to reflect modern working conditions. Smaller changes and requirements based on new technologies would be the carrier's responsibility.
7. WOTAB should determine the discrepancy of driver growth plans at large vs small carriers.
8. There is no "one-stop-shop" hub available for interested potential drivers that consolidates various applicant resources and best practices.
9. Members suggested engaging other companies beyond the major carriers.
10. Industry associations do not message with a unified voice.
11. Training to pivot into different areas of the industry could help retention.
  - a. Autonomous vehicles represent an area where young/new recruits, as well as industry veterans, could find a promising career. Messaging must remain that drivers are needed in the vehicle.
  - b. The industry needs the guidance on how to prepare for AI-based technology.
12. WOTAB seeks to address the "not-in-my-backyard" (NIMBY) perception regarding truck stops? Reinforcing the importance of shipping as demonstrated during COVID could help change trucking's image.
13. Elevate trucking from an ancillary activity to a key aspect of business operations.
  - a. A member provided repeat feedback from businesses: "We want to hire more women, but don't know how to get to them."
  - b. Young people don't see any progression in the career. How can the career become appealing?
  - c. FMCSA data that could be leveraged includes the Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse and Entry-Level Driver Training Program.
  - d. More education needed on how drug and alcohol issues can impact careers. It is imperative to train young people for success, not abandon them once they are in the industry.
14. Achieving a CDL can be cost-prohibitive. Applying the idea of CDL grants for organizations to individuals as well could address this.
15. Potential questions to address recruitment/retention issues:
  - a. Where are our target audiences already present? An example was provided of high number of motor cyclists who also hold a CDL.
  - b. Where are we leveraging other organizations and government departments?
16. Transitioning from cab into the office can sometimes mean a pay cut.
  - a. The traditional offices roles in the industry have strong numbers of women, but diversification is needed in the field. A type of job that might appeal to women in the industry is mechanic, which is currently experiencing a shortage.
17. Alternative paths to employment were highlighted, such as mining company hauling or moving mobile homes. WOTAB emphasized reinforcing the breadth of the industry beyond just major carriers.
18. There isn't a defined path for long-term careers in this industry.

19. Fair Labor Standards Act is a barrier to industry best practices.
20. Workplace protections regarding harassment and bullying are an issue.
21. Televised advertisements take advantage of negative stereotypes. The image of “the public vs truck drivers” is commonplace and hurting retention and recruiting. NextDoor app example also demonstrated a community against a proposed truck stop due to perceived perception.

#### C. Outreach

1. Find avenues to reach transwomen specifically. They work in the industry at a high rate compared to national average.
2. WOTAB seeks to make the career more family friendly.
  - a. Make the career path visible and accessible for children and young adults. Create a school-to-cab pipeline.
  - b. WOTAB recommends reducing financial barriers to training to address the nation’s 100,000+ driver shortage.
3. Outreach is needed for bus drivers, which would include more class B (and Class A) promotion. The board agreed that despite shortages, finding a job is difficult.
4. Highlight places where women’s strengths are present in the industry.
5. Drivers under the age of thirty-five anecdotally represent the threshold of who is entering the industry.
6. Conduct a recruitment campaign geared towards women.
7. Partner with local and national organizations geared towards women. Example provided of Better Business Bureau or Gold Star List.

## II. Deliberations on Task 23-2

#### A. Industry Opportunities and Areas of Success

1. Set clear expectations and portray the career in a truthful light. Also make trucking appealing to prioritized candidates, with driver being most prioritized.
2. Lack of standardization in practice equates to a need for more robust training.
3. Reach the younger generation (under 21) via new technology and applications.
4. In terms of veterans and service members recruitment, the board recommended continuing to leverage successful programs and promoting new initiatives.
5. WOTAB recommends that all companies offer mental health services—including access to mental health professionals and assistance during crisis.
6. Create and manage a systematic collaboration process between agencies and crucial entities like Transportation Intermediaries Association (TIA).

#### B. Recruitment and Retention Deliberations

1. Organizations that achieve the goals addressed in this task need to be supported.
2. Monitor and intervene when safety requirements are not met.
3. No longer hold the industry as exempted from Fair Labor Act.
4. Determine how many drivers leave the industry annually and why?
5. Training scares away recruits. Trust needs to be built back.
  - a. Create stringent standards for training requirements, including certification tests, material provided by Departments/regulators, and oversight.

- b. Create additional requirements on trainers and instructors around harassment and workplace safety. A certification requirement could provide oversight.
- 6. Create and distribute resources for issues such as sexual violence and family matters. Materials should provide easy-to-follow instructions and avenues to address workplace safety.
- 7. WOTAB recommends communicating the family friendly aspects of the career. The career appeals to both single individuals and family providers. Electric vehicles and shorter routes could be conducive to this effort.
  - a. Align with current regulations, best practices, and standards on pregnancy discrimination. The industry is hesitant to comply and leverage best practices successful elsewhere.
  - b. Determine avenues to communicate and/or enforce.
- 8. Determine and disseminate the true number and percent of women in the industry.
  - a. Women in Trucking index referenced 12.1 percent.
  - b. American Trucking Associations referenced approximately 7 percent.
- 9. Develop process and workflow for obtaining information and data relevant to imperatives of this committee and women in trucking.

#### C. Best practices and strategies

- 1. Promote companies that educate, train, and value women drivers and professionals. Create spaces for these messages be distributed.
- 2. The recruiting space is well represented by women. Apply lessons from this area to the larger industry.
- 3. Initiate a full-scale media campaign around image of truck drivers.
- 4. Eliminate predatory contracts, thus addressing the contracts that drivers enter.
- 5. Monitor and enforce driver's working environment and safety. The industry will not change until oversight is present.
- 6. CDL Schools must provide an option for female trainees to learn the trade from a trainer of the same sex.
- 7. Collaborate with and recognize organizations with women leaders who came from the driver's seat.
- 8. Highlight programs and training outside of the driver's seat.
- 9. Establish pathways or resources for niche aspects of the industry that need women, such as non-CDL holder, mechanic and bus-driver.
  - a. Make the training appealing and affordable.
  - b. Target individual's interests and demonstrate how they would be valued in our profession.
  - c. The Whitney Educational rig provided as an example where young girls get behind a simulator and discover how "cool" a career in trucking could be.
- 10. Seek out former driver "All-Stars" who can be a role model for the next generation.
- 11. Review the CDL Intake Survey template to possibly leverage elsewhere.
- 12. Woman's listening strengths and other attributes make them strong candidates for training and facilitating.
  - a. Cautionary note was made regarding danger of being 'forced' into training role.

- b. Personal experience provided of benefits of having a female trainer. Large differences observed in training outcomes from male vs female training. Creating a network of these female trainers would be beneficial.
- 13. Create an easy-to-use Online Portal with resources to begin a career in driving.

D. Workplace environments and systems that support and retain women drivers.

- 1. Standardize process for issues (harassment policies, procedures, etc.).
- 2. Can the manual be bilingual if CDL testing requirements are in English?
- 3. Prioritize individuals rather than the company/carrier.
- 4. Create communications that address the dilemma of respect. “Telling someone you are a female truck driver should inspire respect, not surprise.”
- 5. Incorporate women-centric services at truck stops, such as nail salons, cleanliness station and gym. Partner with organizations who would offer parking.
- 6. Promote healthy lifestyles of actual drivers in the field.
- 7. Encourage or sponsor scientific studies addressing disparity of female vs male-body dominated research. Consider pregnancy, impact of fertility, and female physiology in general.
- 8. Address the imbalance of male vs female representation.
  - a. Review safety recommendations and hold those accountable who create unsafe environments. People need to believe there is justice which is difficult when complaints go unheard and unacted upon.
  - b. A member provided a positive image that could be employed in messaging/promotion consisting of a mom picking up kids in the biggest truck in the school lot—her rig.
- 9. FMCSA should adopt Brenny Transportation’s gold standard.
- 10. Mandate maternity/paternity leave for all drivers
- 11. Employers of drivers should be mandated to provide a means or a location for a restroom, safe place, and an area to address personal hygiene.
- 12. Address the dangers faced by trans individuals in truck stops. These need to be safe spaces for all drivers regardless of race, age, gender, or sexual orientation.
- 13. Determine what funding states offer for drivers, carriers and the industry.
- 14. Conduct outreach to LBGTQ+ communities about trucking. Consider inclusive messaging and potential advertising. This can mean life or death for members of this community.
- 15. Create a Women in Trucking Advocacy Day.