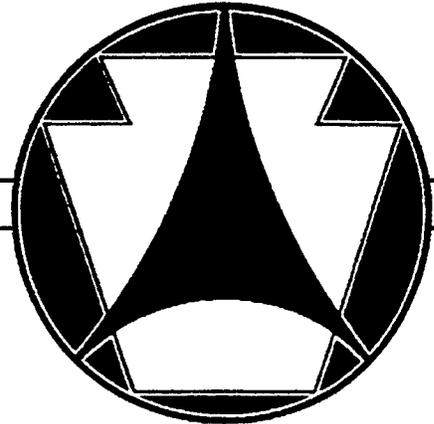




COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

PENNDOT RESEARCH



PENN TRAIN TRANSIT TRAINING
AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

University-Based Research Education and Technology Transfer
AGREEMENT NO. 359704, WORK ORDER 68

FINAL REPORT

May 29, 2001

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16. Abstract The Penn TRAIN program is an extremely valuable resource to Pennsylvania's urban, rural, and community transit systems, their current customers, and employees. Because of PENNDOT's continuing commitment to the program and the allocation of significant resources beyond those provided by the national RTAP program, Penn TRAIN has been able to develop the nationally recognized Penn SCORE driver training program and also take a leadership role in such activities as the Mid-Atlantic Regional RTAP effort. The move to integrate PPTA and Penn TRAIN activities under the management of the PPTA will further enhance Penn TRAIN's ability to serve its customers and insure that training and other activities that it promotes meet the needs of its customers, the transit systems of Pennsylvania.		14. Sponsoring Agency Code	
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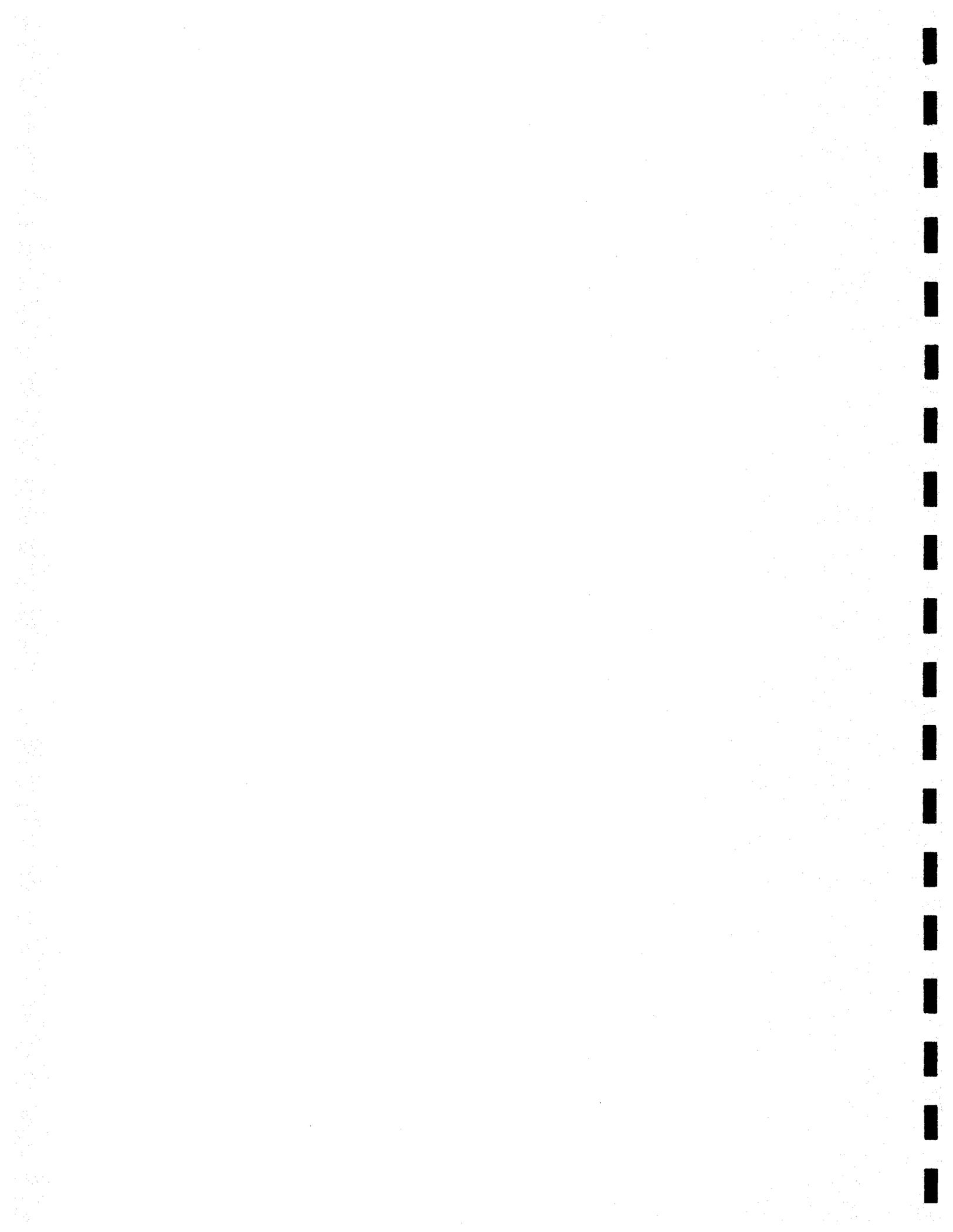
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Background on the Penn TRAIN Program

Since 1988, The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PENNDOT) has directed and funded the highly successful Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) that is part of a larger, federally funded program to provide training and technical assistance to personnel of rural public and community transit system. The Pennsylvania RTAP effort has evolved through three distinct phases of its operation. From 1988 through 1991 the RTAP program was administered by the Pennsylvania Transportation Institute (PTI) at Penn State through a competitively procured contract that also involved several training and technical assistance subcontractors. In 1992, the program was redirected and has become known as Penn TRAIN (Pennsylvania Transportation Resource and Information Network). From 1992 through mid-1995, the program was managed by a full-time training coordinator based in Indiana County, Pennsylvania. Training was provided by subcontractors that were selected based on a competitive process.

The third phase of Penn TRAIN's evolution began in 1995 when, once again, the program was administered by PTI. This shift was significant in three ways. First, the Penn TRAIN coordinator became a full-time Penn State employee and became part of a support team that carried out the Penn TRAIN mission. Second, the RTAP funding available to Penn TRAIN was supplemented by a nearly equal amount from the LTAP, local roads program. This funding source allowed Penn TRAIN to increase its services to urban as well as rural transit systems. The LTAP funding was also instrumental in Penn TRAIN's ability to develop its Penn SCORE driver training program.

The fourth phase of the Penn TRAIN evolution and the time period covered by this work order was marked by the move of Penn TRAIN from PTI's University Park offices to Harrisburg - first to the Penn State Harrisburg Campus in Middletown, and then in September 2000 to the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association's new offices on Third Street in downtown Harrisburg. This relocation was the first step toward the final goal of placing the Penn TRAIN program under the management of PPTA, a goal which will likely be achieved by July 1, 2001.

Funds provided through this work order (\$75,398) supplemented approximately \$125,000 of support provided for Penn TRAIN by the Bureau of Public Transportation. Together, these funds were used to carry out an 11 task work program. This administrative report summarizes activities within these 11 tasks for the period covered by this work order -- March 20, 2000 - September 19, 2000.

Summary of Activities by Task

Task 1: Provide Technical Assistance

Penn TRAIN maintains a toll-free 800 number so that transit system personnel can contact Penn TRAIN staff with technical questions or requests for information. From March 2000 - June 2000 this phone number was directed to the Penn TRAIN office in Middletown and calls were handled by Mr. Raymond Carpenter, the Penn TRAIN project manager. However, Mr. Carpenter resigned his position in June 2000 so that from mid-June through the end of the project, calls were directed to PTI and Ms. Susan Fuoss, the Penn TRAIN staff assistant, responded to the calls by either answering questions concerning upcoming training programs or redirecting technical questions to PENNDOT Bureau of Public Transportation staff. Because transit system personnel became aware of the staffing changes within the Penn TRAIN program, the number of technical questions declined after Mr. Carpenter left the program; most calls received on the 800 concerned arrangements for training programs. Nevertheless, approximately 10 technical assistance calls per month were received and directed to the appropriate PennDOT staff.

The 800 number was transferred to the PPTA offices in September 2000; however, calls received on the number were forwarded to PTI until the Penn TRAIN staff assistant was hired by PPTA in March 2001.

Task 2: Coordinate and Provide Training

The largest single activity of the Penn TRAIN program, both in terms of staff time commitment and direct expenditure, is training. The topics to be covered by the training and the specific training schedule that was followed was developed by Penn TRAIN staff in consultation with the PPTA Penn TRAIN Advisory Committee. The training programs conducted during this project period resulted from a Penn TRAIN planning retreat held in the fall of 1999.

During the project period, nearly all of Penn TRAIN's training resources were devoted to the Penn SCORE driver training program. Penn SCORE is a 100-hour train-the-trainer program designed to develop driver trainers for transit systems. The program was developed by an industry committee and then the curriculum was taught by professional trainers with expertise in the various subject areas. The seven core topics covered in the one to three day programs include:

- Hiring great drivers – pre-employment and driver profiling
- Passenger assistance – training to proficiency
- Driver wellness – stress and health
- Defensive-driver instruction
- Transit driver safety orientation
- Drivers and customer service
- Developing essential training skills

Approximately 20 trainers have completed the Penn SCORE program each of the three years that it has been offered. Once individuals have completed the program, and their transit system employer agrees to make them available to other systems to conduct at least one training program, the Penn SCORE program, through the PENNDOT funds (both this work order and the Bureau of Public Transit funds), provides at no cost a set of training materials (printed

workbooks and videos) that allow the Penn SCORE graduates to teach each course. These materials cost about \$1,300 per set.

During the March 2000 - September 2000 period, the following Penn SCORE programs were conducted:

- Hiring Great Drivers, May 22, 2000, 31 attendees, State College
- Coaching the Van Driver/Transit Driver, May 23-24, 2000, 32 attendees, State College
- System Safety of Transit Operators, May 25, 2000, 31 attendees, State College
- Drivers & Customer Service, May 26, 2000, 32 attendees, State College
- Passenger Assistance to Proficiency, July 17-19, 2000, 11 attendees, State College
- Passenger Assistance to Proficiency, July 19-21, 2000, 8 attendees, State College

Finally, during the project period, initial development of a maintenance management program similar in philosophy to the Penn SCORE program began under the direction of the PPTA Maintenance Committee. The goal of this program is to develop a number of training modules to improve the knowledge and skills of transit maintenance managers. The development of this curriculum is still under way.

Task 3: Operate A Resource Library

Penn TRAIN maintains a resource library of materials primarily designed to assist with training. These materials are available for loan to transit systems at no cost. Transit systems can request specific information resources by either calling the 800 number, or by identifying the resources by using the Penn TRAIN web site that includes a searchable catalogue of materials. In fact, most materials are sent in response to a general request for information on a specific topic where Penn TRAIN staff identify the most appropriate resources.

The Penn TRAIN library was located at the Penn TRAIN Middletown office until August 2000 when it was moved to the PPTA offices. Since that time it has been reorganized and new

materials have been added to support the Penn SCORE and other training needs. The library lends approximately 10 items per month.

Task 4: Manage the Peer-to-Peer Network

Throughout the history of Penn TRAIN, one of the program goals was to have the Penn TRAIN program staff serve as brokers to connect transit peers to each other to provide training and technical assistance. One of the primary activities of the Penn TRAIN project manager has been to use his/her knowledge of the industry to link peers to solve problems. However, because of the staff changes in the Penn TRAIN program during the project period, these peer-to-peer connections have been minimal except as related to the Penn SCORE driver training program. The Penn TRAIN Advisory Committee and Bureau of Public Transportation staff continue to review ways to improve the effectiveness of the peer-to-peer approach and new efforts are likely once the program transitions to PPTA management.

Task 5. Award Training Scholarships

Penn TRAIN will provide up to \$250 (or 75 percent of the cost) to transit system personnel to attend transit-training programs. The scholarship program has been publicized on a regular basis, but its use has been limited. The same four to six transit systems make most of the request for scholarship support. Perhaps one reason for the limited use is the availability of low-cost Penn TRAIN-sponsored programs that do not require scholarship support. Four scholarships were awarded to employees of rural transit systems during the project period.

Task 6. Develop and Operate and Expanded On-Line World Wide Web Site

Penn TRAIN has developed and continues to operate a web site for Pennsylvania transit systems (<http://www.patransit.psu.edu>). This web site, hosted by PTI, provides information on upcoming training programs, access to the Penn TRAIN resource library catalog, links to related transit

sites, and a series of exchange forums to allow transit personnel to exchange information on specific topics (e.g., maintenance). Perhaps most important, the web site includes a listing of announcements from PENNDOT to grantees and it also allows grantees to download and upload forms, applications, and other documents and files needed to receive PENNDOT funding. During the project period, the web site was enhanced to allow PENNDOT personnel to remotely post the announcements and upload files. Further, the forums feature that allows special topics groups to interact was added to the web site.

Task 7: Prepare and Distribute Information Brochures, Surveys, and Announcements

Penn TRAIN publicized its training activities by mailing program announcements to approximately 200 individuals in Pennsylvania and surrounding states. Other activities such as submitting articles for the PPTA newsletter and national publications, were not given priority during the project period due to lack of staffing, but will resume once Penn TRAIN is fully staffed.

Task 8: Coordinate PPTA/PennDOT Activities

In addition to its standalone training activities, Penn TRAIN also conducted training in cooperation with PPTA during the annual Pennsylvania Transit Conference held in Hershey in April 2000. Penn TRAIN and PPTA split the cost of keynote speakers and workshop leaders. Further, Penn TRAIN supported training activities as part of PENNDOT's annual Rural Management Assistance meeting held in March 2000. The training topic for the March 2000 meeting was financial planning for small urban and rural transit systems.

Task 9: Promote Mid-Atlantic Regional RTAP

Pennsylvania has taken the lead to establish an informal coordinating committee of the RTAP managers from surrounding states. The purpose of this Mid-Atlantic Regional RTAP group is to

co-sponsor training programs that individual states alone could not justify, and to share information on managing RTAP programs. Further, through a web page maintained as part of the Penn TRAIN web site, each state informs the other states of their training schedules so that out-of-state participants can avail themselves of additional training opportunities. As the leader of the Mid-Atlantic Regional RTAP effort, Penn TRAIN staff maintain the web-based calendar and coordinate joint training programs. Each state takes turns hosting the training events, but to date, Penn TRAIN has arranged for trainers and promoted the programs. During the March 2000 - September 2000 period, the following training programs were conducted through the Mid-Atlantic group:

- PASS (supervisory training) - 4/4-6/200, Raleigh, NC - 14 attended
- PASS - 9/19-21/2000, Albany, NY - 18 attended

Tasks 10 and 11: Prepare Draft Final and Final Report

This report constitutes the final administrative report of activities for this work order. In addition, an Ideas Have Consequences summary was provided to PENNDOT describing this program and its benefits.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Penn TRAIN program is an extremely valuable resource to Pennsylvania's 100-plus urban, rural, and community transit systems, their customers, and their employees. Because of PENNDOT's continuing commitment to the program and the allocation of significant resources beyond those provided by the national RTAP program, Penn TRAIN has been able to develop the nationally recognized Penn SCORE driver training program and also to take a leadership role in such activities as the Mid-Atlantic Regional RTAP effort. The move to integrate PPTA and Penn TRAIN activities under the management of the PPTA will further enhance Penn TRAIN's ability to serve its customers and insure that training and other activities that it promotes meet the needs of its customers, the transit systems of Pennsylvania.

