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Theme #2: Driver Education and Workforce Development

Elderly – Education and Licensing

1. Overcoming smartphone-related barriers to ridesourcing and public transportation for elderly (RNS18).
2. Compare the age when rural elders stop driving due to deteriorating vision/health with their urban counterparts. Develop measures of willingness to stop driving and make comparisons based on land use, proximity to shopping and essential services, transit availability, and quality of transit service.
3. Assess potential impacts of in-vehicle technology on driving safety for rural elders.
4. Compare state practices for licensing elderly drivers and assisting rural elders who are no longer able to drive safely with finding alternative transportation and alternatives to transportation.

Employment Impacts of Drug/Alcohol Use

1. Evaluate rural transportation agency employee attitudes toward the use of marijuana and cannabidiol during working and non-working hours.
2. Identify strategies for efficiently recruiting employees who are willing to comply with agency drug/alcohol policies.
3. Develop case examples of rural transportation employers with successful approaches to the prevention and treatment of employee substance abuse disorders.

Technical Capacity

1. Identify the skills and knowledge needs for transportation workers involved in responses to natural disasters and long-term adaptations to climate change.
2. Identify the training and employee development techniques and formats that are the most effective for various types of rural transportation agency workforce training. Evaluate trade-offs between cost, employee availability, and knowledge retention for various workforce development techniques. Develop guidance on recommended formats for various types of technical and vocational education relevant to rural transportation agencies.
3. Identify effective communication tools/methods for transportation agencies at the local level that could be used by agencies to effectively market/communicate transportation projects/programs to the community.
4. Develop a reference guide and literature summary to assist transportation planners serving small communities with travel demand modeling and the application of geographic information systems (GIS) (ADA30).

5. Identify the skills, training, and other workforce development activities necessary for rural transportation agencies to utilize and maintain emerging technologies effectively.
6. Document best practices for recruitment and retention of volunteer drivers for healthcare-related transportation.
7. Document strategies to recruit and retain the rural emergency medical services (EMS) workforce.
8. Identify the technical and non-technical skills needed by elected officials, managers, and directors who oversee public works and transportation agencies, compare with available leadership development courses, and identify obstacles to course participation.
9. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP).
10. Develop training programs to provide law enforcement officers with up-to-date information on pedestrian and bicyclist safety, such as techniques for enforcing laws intended to protect non-motorized road users from aggressive and inattentive drivers.
11. Develop training programs to provide law enforcement officers with up-to-date information on roadway safety strategies and techniques.

Transportation Agency Recruitment/Retention

1. Analyze the long-term and near-term workforce requirements for rural public transportation providers, highway agencies, and public works departments, including emerging trends in the required skill sets (e.g., ability to maintain roadside electronic devices). Identify regional labor shortages.
2. Evaluate the expectations and attitudes of younger members of the workforce who are potentially interested in employment at rural transit and roadway agencies. Identify aspects of compensation, scheduling, working conditions, and organizational culture that are salient to younger workers. Develop case examples of transportation employers who have modified their operations to attract and retain younger workers.
3. Survey younger workers to identify perceptions of the working conditions and organizational culture of rural transportation agencies. Compare perceptions of potential employees with those of existing employees to identify misperceptions.
4. Document the recruitment and retention strategies that have been successfully implemented within transportation agencies, including strategies for recruiting early career professionals and qualified staff for leadership programs to rural areas.
5. Evaluate the effects of modifying the standards for agency criminal background checks, for example reducing emphasis on minor crimes and convictions that occurred long ago.
6. Review agency outreach efforts to identify effective recruitment strategies.
7. Compare the outcomes of a transit operator recruitment strategy based on hiring employees with good customer service skills followed by training on driving--rather than recruiting CDL holders and training them on customer service.

Youth – Education and Licensing

1. Identify how driver education programs vary by state.

2. Compare driver education programs for tribal residents and identify best practices for addressing the road safety issues that are prevalent in tribal communities.
3. Compare the driving tasks, situations, near-crash events, and crashes encountered by urban-based and rural-based residents and determine whether the skills emphasized in driver education programs should differ for the two groups.
4. Develop transportation educational programs for K-8 students that can be incorporated into STEM curriculums.
5. Effects in rural areas of generational changes in obtaining driver's licenses (RNS19).
6. Review current state practices for education, licensing, and regulation of drivers of agricultural trucks that do not require a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).