



On the Road

The outlook for driving occupations in Minnesota is strong, with 23,600 job openings anticipated between 2010 and 2020.

For Minnesotans who make their livings as truck drivers and bus operators, the view from their “office” window often is a highway or street. They are a part of the transportation industry, a necessary, vital and growing sector in the state. Minnesota ranks 17th nationwide in freight shipments, valued at \$237 billion in 2010.¹ The state is 19th in annual transportation and warehousing employment payroll, which reached nearly \$3.4 billion in 2012.²

Getting from Here to There

The transportation and warehousing industry accounted for 92,700 jobs in Minnesota in 2012. Industry employment wasn’t immune to the Great Recession. By the end of 2012, the sector was still 6,900 jobs shy of its 2007 level. Transportation employment can mirror sectors that it depends on, including manufacturing and construction, which suffered substantial job losses during the Great

Recession and still hadn’t fully recovered by the end of 2013.

While the transportation industry includes all modes of transport — air, water and road — almost half (45 percent) of the industry’s jobs are in truck transportation and in transit and ground passenger transportation. The truck transportation subsector provides over-the-road transportation of cargo using trucks and tractor trailers. The subsector is divided into general freight trucking and specialized

freight trucking, reflecting the differences in equipment used, load carried, scheduling and other networking services, including local or long-distance transportation. The transit and ground passenger transportation subsector includes urban transit systems, chartered buses, school buses, and inter-urban bus transportation and taxis.

While employment dipped in truck transportation during the recession, the sector has been on the upswing since 2010, finishing 2012 with 24,088 jobs (see Figure 1). Moreover, employment continued to increase between the second quarter of 2012 and the second quarter of 2013. Small annual employment gains have occurred in the transit and ground passenger transportation sector as well since 2006, prior to the Great Recession.

Employment forecasts show strong job growth projected for the truck transportation industry in Minnesota between 2010 and 2020. An estimated 6,670 new jobs are expected, a growth rate of 29.1 percent. Regional employment growth projections range from 40.7 percent in northwestern Minnesota to 21.1 percent in northeastern Minnesota. Transit and ground passenger transportation is projected to grow more slowly, just 7.3 percent (938 jobs) statewide.

In for the Long Haul

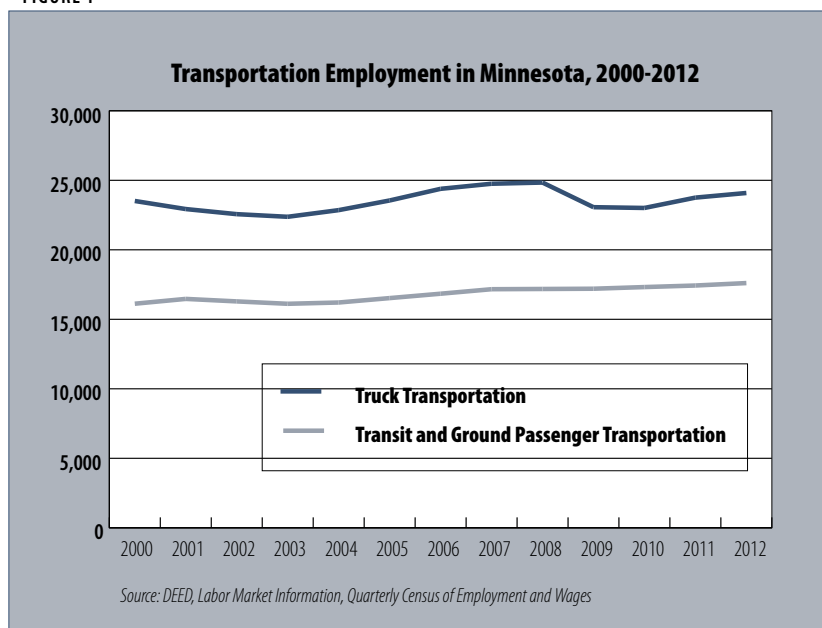
As you might imagine, transportation employment is heavily weighted toward driving occupations, including tractor-trailer and delivery service drivers in the truck transportation sector and bus drivers in the transit and ground passenger transportation sector.³ Heavy-truck drivers can also service the construction industry, delivering finished goods or the raw materials needed in the building process, like dirt or cement, or clearing roads of snow. Table 1 shows Minnesota employment in select driving occupations and median wages for the second quarter of 2013.

These driving occupations typically require a commercial driver's license or CDL (see



PHOTO: JUDY PARKER

FIGURE 1



sidebar on Page 6). Short-term job training programs help prospective transportation industry employees get the necessary skills to work in this demanding field (see Table 2). For long-haul truck drivers, the job is often a lifestyle choice, as it may be necessary to be away from home for days or weeks at a time, and much of the time on the road is spent alone.

Multitasking, problem solving and mechanical skills are the key aptitudes needed to be successful in a truck driving program, according to Bill Fath, an instructor at Alexandria Technical and Community College, which offers a 16-week truck driving course that has been around for more than 50 years. A valid driver’s license and a 12-month clean driving record are required for the 18 to 20 students who participate in the program each session.

According to Fath, the qualities that lead to success in a truck driving program are common sense, communication skills, and a good attitude and work ethic.

These skills are evident in the work readiness competencies required for transportation program participants at the YWCA St. Paul, which offers a CDL Class B training program sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and city of St. Paul.

TABLE 1

Driving Occupations in Minnesota		
	Employment	Median Wage (2Q 2013)
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	32,330	\$19.49
Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	13,170	\$15.79
Bus Drivers, School or Special Client	13,400	\$15.44
Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	3,030	\$16.00

Source: DEED, Labor Market Information Office, Occupational Employment Statistics

TABLE 2

Key Skills for Drivers
Operations and Control
Operations Monitoring
Judgment and Decision Making
Time Management
Troubleshooting
Active Listening
Critical Thinking

Source: O*NET, www.online.onetcenter.org

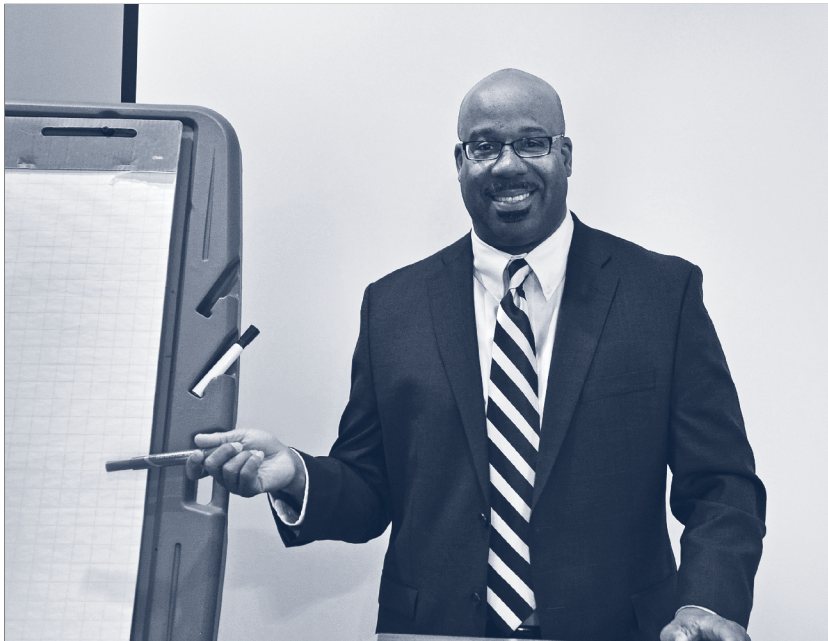


PHOTO: JUDY PARKER

LaRohn Latimer is the transportation programs manager at the YWCA in St. Paul.

“Our CDL training program is for unemployed and underemployed individuals looking to get into highway heavy construction,” said LaRohn Latimer, transportation programs manager at the YWCA.

The YWCA program coaches students on professionalism, teamwork, quality communication, planning and time management, accepting supervision, problem solving and financial literacy. They partner with Interstate Truck Driving School in South St. Paul to provide driving instruction.

Program graduates find a wealth of opportunities for well-paying, full-time positions driving in the construction industry and

operating school buses, armored cars or delivery service vehicles.

The demand for transportation workers is high, according to Latimer.

“Things are converging at the right time,” he explained. “You have major construction projects, like the Vikings and St. Paul Saints stadiums, and high demand for workers in the North Dakota oil fields, which is drawing talent out of Minnesota.”

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights has a strong focus on increasing training and employment opportunities for minorities and women, who have been traditionally under-represented in the construction

and transportation industries. Women are estimated to hold about 4 percent of the truck driving jobs in Minnesota, while just over 7 percent of the jobs are estimated to be held by communities of color.⁴

“Part of our mission at the YWCA St. Paul is empowering women and eliminating racism,” Latimer said.

The impact of the YWCA training program on participants is profound. It’s common for Latimer to get phone calls from graduates who thank him for helping them achieve a career path.

“They do all the work,” he said. “I just hold the light.”



Know Your Class

All truck and passenger vehicle drivers require a license, depending on the weight and materials carried. You must be 18 to apply for a Minnesota Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and 21 years of age to transport hazardous materials. In Minnesota, the most common licenses are:

Commercial Driver — Class A

Drive a vehicle towing a unit of more than 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) with a gross combination weight rating (truck plus trailer) over 26,000 pounds.

Commercial Driver — Class B

Drive a single-unit vehicle that is over 26,000 pounds GVWR.

Commercial Drive — Class C

Drive a single-unit vehicle, 26,000 pounds GVWR or less, with one or more endorsements for hazardous materials, passengers or school bus (with passenger endorsement).

Source: Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Driver and Vehicle Services



The Future

Tom Gierok, driving instructor at Southeast Technical in Winona, has a 100 percent placement rate for people who want a job as a truck driver. Gierok is seeing more local jobs and demand, and he expects that to continue over the next several decades.

Statistics support that point of view. Employment projections for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers indicate 7,700 new jobs in Minnesota between 2010 and 2020, a growth rate of 22.7 percent. Nearly 2,300 new jobs will be available for light truck and delivery service drivers and more than 1,000 openings for bus drivers. Replacement workers will be needed, too, as workers retire or otherwise leave the profession. In total, 23,600 job openings are projected in driving occupations between 2010 and 2020.

“The economy is better and fleets are growing, adding more trucks and hiring more drivers,” Fath said. “The industry is trying to get drivers home more, too, to be with family and loved ones.”

Fath’s 35 years of experience — as a mechanic, driver, dispatcher, owner-operator and co-owner of a trucking company — shows the possibilities of climbing the career ladder in the trucking industry.

The opportunity to use truck driving as a way into self-employment resonates with Latimer.

“The end game — when we talk about under-represented folks in the construction or truck driving industry — is that eventually we’ll get some owner-operators,” he said.

And experts don’t foresee anything that would make truck drivers in less demand in the future.

“Until we can land a plane or park a barge on the top of a grocery store’s roof, we’ll need truckers,” Gierok said. ¹



¹Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Research and Innovation Technology Administration.

²Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, private employment payroll.

³Several driving occupations are not included in this analysis: taxi drivers and chauffeurs and driver/sales workers, for which a commercial driver’s license is not required.

⁴Calculations based on five-year American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau) data from 2006-2010.