

Charge to the Conference

Michael D. Meyer, *Georgia Institute of Technology*

When Secretary Slater announced the Garrett A. Morgan Technology and Transportation Futures Program, he said:

We are at a crossroads in the transportation field, with much of the seasoned workforce retiring and the demand for traditional and new skills expanding. . . . The federal government, transportation agencies, the education community and the private sector share an interest in developing the human resources needed to run the transportation enterprise of the next century.

The purpose of this conference is to examine the education and training needs related to all aspects of intermodal transportation—technology, advanced logistics, information systems, planning, and management. The conference steering committee has put together a comprehensive program, which includes representatives of the educational community, the transportation industry, and government, to discuss many of the issues that will be important as we look at the needs that will emerge over the next several years.

I am not going to spend time trying to gain a consensus on the definition of “intermodalism”; however, with regard to education and training, the basic point of departure is that we have to adopt a *total systems perspective* on transportation. We cannot look at one link versus another or one mode versus another. Certainly we have to focus on efficiencies associated with the connection points, but we also have to consider the bigger picture—customer orientation and an understanding of the movement of both people and goods from origin to

destination. This is a much broader perspective than that which we generally teach in universities and training programs, but one that is certainly needed if we are really serious about intermodal transportation. The transportation employees of tomorrow need to have this broader perspective if they are to be successful.

The conference is organized in a way that will bring out some of the needs for the future and, it is hoped, begin to define how to meet those needs. We will proceed with the Keynote Address, followed by a panel of four distinguished individuals representing different perspectives on transportation—education, operations and planning, passengers, and freight. This panel will be followed by case study presentations illustrating some of the key skills and issues associated with being successful in a transportation organization. The case studies will be followed by a panel discussion on characteristics of the transportation employee of the future and then participants will divide into smaller discussion groups. There will be an informal evening session in which those interested can learn about and discuss international transportation programs and initiatives developed and offered in institutions outside of the United States. Tomorrow, the focus will shift from what is desired in the transportation workforce in terms of skills training to what is being offered and produced in terms of educational and training programs. This part of the conference will include reports on the status of what is being offered at different institutions and through existing educational and training programs. There will be a panel discussion focusing on internship and mentoring programs, a key component of transportation education

and training. The panel discussion will be followed by a second set of breakout discussions.

On the final day, I will recap events, discussions, and recommendations and then ask a six-person Firing Line Panel representing all aspects of the transportation industry and government to react and respond to the recommendations. It is very important for all participants to understand that this is a working conference. Our goal by the final morning is to have developed an outline of specific observations, conclusions, and recommendations.

Another important component of this conference is the poster displays and exhibits through which organizations and institutions have the opportunity to illustrate, explain, and describe some of their programs and activities. The conference offers a total package and provides opportunities for each participant to provide input.

For those who were unable to attend the opening dinner and hear the remarks of Deputy Secretary Mortimer Downey yesterday evening, I also want to briefly mention yet another component of the conference—the essay contest, which was open to high school seniors participating in the Transportation Careers Academy Program (TCAP) in Los Angeles County, California. Students enrolled in TCAP were invited to write an essay about what they had gained from participating in a high school school-work program aimed at producing future transportation professionals. The two essay winners are with us for the entire conference and read their winning essays at last night's dinner. Those who were unable to attend are invited and encouraged to read these impres-

sive essays. Deputy Secretary Downey said last night that if this is an indication of the future human resource pool for the transportation profession, we are in good hands.

I am honored to introduce our Keynote Speaker. When the conference committee first met over a year ago, it was agreed that we would like to begin the conference with a speaker who understands and can articulate the concept of intermodal transportation, who recognizes that education and training are key to the future of the transportation industry and what that implies with regard to university, community college, and industry programs. Robert Krebs was the first on everyone's list of candidates.

Robert Krebs started his career in the railroad industry in June 1966 as a Special Duty Officer to the Executive Department of the Southern Pacific. Time will not permit a reading of all the evolutionary steps of his promotions and career movement—it will suffice to say that in April 1997, he was named Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company. He is well known and respected for his views on the issue of the education and training needs and the professional needs of the transportation industry, both as an industry leader and as the Chairman of the National Commission on Intermodal Transportation. He will provide a good point of departure for this conference. Immediately following his address, a panel of distinguished transportation representatives from the public, private, and academic communities will offer a response.