

Workforce Development: A Community and Family Affair

September 2022

Addressing the transportation industry's critical workforce gap is an important issue for transit agencies, educators, local and state governments, and more—but sometimes it's also a family affair.

In 2002, the Mineta Transportation Institute hosted its first Mineta Summer Transportation Institute ([MSTI](#)), which seeks to address the employee shortage in the transportation industry as well as to increase youth interest in transportation related careers. The program, free for students, gives an inside look at the many roles that are required to move people and goods through hands-on experiences at places like [Google](#), [Caltrans](#), Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority ([VTA](#)), [California High Speed Rail](#) construction sites, the [Port of Oakland](#), and more. MSTI's inaugural class hosted just 18 students, of which 84% represented minorities. In 2022, 32 students completed the program and earned transferable college credit. One of those students was Sunnyvale local Anthony Torborg.

Now a senior at [Summit Denali High School](#), Anthony explains that MSTI provided him with insight and guidance in choosing a career path by being exposed to a variety of transportation roles and connecting with many different perspectives. "I plan to go to college and study electrical engineering or maybe attend a trade school where I can work with my hands fixing things. I hope to make a difference in my community by inventing things or working on ways to improve our environment," Anthony said. "This experience will open up the doors to a future in the transportation industry."



(Left to right) William, Anthony, and Marisol with their father Greg Torborg at the 2022 Mineta Summer Transportation Institute graduation ceremony

This is exactly the purpose of MSTI: to be one of the most critical workforce development programs we have in our state, bring more and more students and diverse voices to transportation, and inspire students to find their way to a role that empowers them and their community. In this case, the program drew not only one student, but his whole family.

Anthony initially became interested in transportation after his older brother, William Torborg, participated in the program in 2018. William is currently attending Santa Clara University studying Civil Engineering.

“The most memorable part of my time at MSTI was meeting with [Rod Diridon](#) to talk about the evolution of public transit in California. I was able to talk to him one on one to discuss working in this field, and finding creative solutions to problems,” explained William.

Now, the two brothers are encouraging the next in line, their little sister, to explore all the MSTI and the transportation field have to offer.

While this family experience might be unique, the opportunities William found in the program that motivated him to move into STEM and inspire his younger siblings underscores the importance and potential influence of early workforce development programs like the Summer Transportation Institute. MSTI partnerships with public and private agencies that contribute to the transportation industry serve as critical touch points for students exploring careers and the industry’s impact on their community.

Overall, MSTI seeks to address the employee shortage in the transportation industry and increase youth interest in transportation-related careers. Workforce development programs also introduce traditionally underrepresented and underserved youth to opportunities leading to well-paying jobs and important roles in their communities. In the post-program survey for the 2022 MSTI program, 96% of students agreed the program encouraged them to consider a career in transportation, and 100% of students expressed overall satisfaction with the program. One participant wrote, “I really enjoyed the class and I feel that it was an important part of my path to a career because it showed me more types of careers in transportation.”

MTI Executive Director, Karen Philbrick, PhD