

TRANSPORTATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE:

Empowering the Next Generation of Traffic Signal Professionals



Vanessa Corrao

Education Program Coordinator
CT Training and Technical Assistance (T2) Center
University of Connecticut
Storrs, Connecticut

The Connecticut (CT) Training & Technical Assistance (T2) Center at the University of Connecticut has been actively working with state and municipal public works agencies to address their workforce challenges. A new T2 Transportation Workforce Development Initiative has officially launched at our center, marking the beginning of a comprehensive effort to introduce technical high school students to exciting career opportunities in the transportation industry. This initiative connects traffic signal professionals with high school students to introduce them to the responsibilities of a traffic signal technician and to foster excitement about joining the workforce. It also encourages collaboration between state and municipal professionals who are participating in the CT T2 Center's Transportation Leadership Program (TLP). Additionally, their work on this initiative provides them with credit towards their Pay It Forward project, a culmination of their leadership journey in TLP and an opportunity to positively impact the transportation community.

Stephen Frycz, traffic signal supervisor in the Transportation, Traffic, and Parking Department with the City of Stamford and a subject matter expert and instructor in the CT T2 Center's Traffic Signal Technician Certificate Program, teamed up with Britton Wilson, transportation district electrical supervisor with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), to collaborate on this effort. Both Stephen and Britton were especially excited to engage with and inspire



technical high school students, as they began their own careers in similar classrooms. After visiting two technical high schools in Connecticut and presenting to sophomores, juniors, and seniors, 16 students expressed an interest in pursuing a career in the traffic signal industry, and the experience helped 49 students gain a better understanding of career opportunities in the transportation field.



To kick off the day, students learned about careers in transportation by discussing job roles and responsibilities, salaries, and career paths. A KWL chart (What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned) helped guide the discussion around their interests and questions. Having open conversations with traffic signal professionals who once sat in the same classroom was a meaningful and inspiring experience for all. Students were also introduced to a Traffic Signal Technician Career Guide, which outlines essential skills, training, and job opportunities, a resource they could take with them to explore further. When asked about what aspect of careers in the traffic signal industry interested them most, one student replied, "I am the most interested in the technology of it all. There is more tech in signal lights than I thought." Another student noted, "Safety, because it is important." One of the highlights of the day was a hands-on activity in which students wired a traffic signal, providing them real-world experience and showing them the technical skills needed in the field. The students' electrical shop teacher commented

on the experience by saying, "It was such a valuable experience for our students. I thought Steve and Britton did an excellent job. I really appreciated how honest and direct they were with the students." Both schools have expressed interest in welcoming us back next year.

As this initiative moves forward, we're excited to connect with more students and schools throughout Connecticut, helping them explore careers in transportation. The CT T2 Center will be developing a web page that will serve as a workforce hub of news and resources about these ongoing initiatives. To further support the development and retention of transportation professionals once they have entered the workforce, the T2 Center offers three levels of our Traffic Signal Technician Certificate Program (<https://bit.ly/4e0tOY3>). We look forward to inspiring the next generation of traffic signal professionals!

Vanessa Corrao can be reached at vanessa.corrao@uconn.edu. 

