

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

**DEPARTMENTAL PERSONNEL MANUAL SYSTEM**

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**DPM LETTER:** 300-21

**DATE:** 2/29/96

**SUBJECT:** DOT Career Transition Program

The Department of Transportation is committed to assisting its employees who are affected by reorganization, realignment, and downsizing. In response to the President's directive of September 12, 1995, DOT has adopted this program for assisting its surplus and displaced employees. This program was developed by the DOT Partnership Council; adopted by the Council on February 14, 1996; and approved by the Secretary of Transportation.

This program applies to all DOT employees unless otherwise officially specified by an appropriate authority.

**CONCEPTS AND PHILOSOPHY**

The DOT program is based on the following principles:

- The DOT program will be equitable and consistent for both employees and managers, and be supported by management and labor at all levels;
- Career transition will be identified and communicated as a priority for DOT;
- The operating administrations will work together on a cooperative, intermodal basis in implementation of the program;
- The program will apply equally to headquarters and the field;
- Operating administrations will have the flexibility needed to effectively manage their downsizing/realignment efforts;
- To the maximum extent possible, operation of the program will be through existing organizational structures, and within the framework of ongoing human resources policies and procedures;

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- DOT will provide its employees with reasonable time for transition assistance, specifically:
  - reduction-in-force (RIF) notices will be given to employees at least 120 days prior to effective date, unless circumstances outside management's control require a shorter period;
  - displaced employees will be given a minimum of 32 hours of official time per pay period to pursue transition activities; however, recognizing that finding a new job can be a full time job, operating administrations are encouraged to grant official time on a full-time basis to employees who have received a RIF separation notice; and
  - it is recommended that operating administrations give their surplus employees a minimum of 16 hours of official time per pay period to pursue career transition activities; however, this decision to grant such official time rests with the operating administration.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM**

The DOT Partnership Council will continue to oversee and evaluate the program, and make recommendations to the Secretary on changes or improvements. In addition, there will be a DOT Transition Coordinator responsible for interface among the Partnership Council, the operating administrations, and various support systems and groups (such as the DOT Training Council) responsible for implementation of the program. The Partnership Council's ongoing oversight will be conducted primarily through an advisory board composed of one management representative, one union representative, the DOT Transition Coordinator, and the chair of the DOT Training Council.

In addition, as initial implementation of the program is underway, a Field Support Work Group, composed of representatives from the operating administrations, will be established to identify sites where DOT employees are located, assess the current availability of transition services in those locations, and make recommendations on alternative sources of those services.

Each operating administration will develop an internal program which supplements, but may not diminish, the requirements of the DOT program. Operating administration programs should include a strategy for educating managers on their responsibilities under the program. The Office of the Secretary will review operating administration programs for consistency with Governmentwide and DOT requirements. Those programs must be submitted to the Departmental Office of Personnel as soon as they are complete. Operating administrations must fulfill any internal labor relations obligations in developing their programs.

### **IDENTIFICATION/DESIGNATION OF DISPLACED AND SURPLUS EMPLOYEES**

The term displaced employee generally will have the same meaning as defined in 5 CFR 330.604 and 330.703, i.e., individuals who have received a proposed RIF separation notice or have been separated through RIF. For the mandatory placement provisions of the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP), the full definition in 5 CFR 330.703 will apply.

Surplus employees are those who are likely to face displacement through anticipated RIF or internal reorganization/realignment to a different position. Each operating administration is responsible for designating its surplus employees. Because the designation as surplus is

a serious matter and carries with it certain entitlements and benefits, the designation of an employee as surplus must be taken with the utmost seriousness. Therefore, the determination of surplus status must be done by the same official(s) who can authorize a RIF.

The following criteria will be applied to determine surplus status:

- a DOT or operating administration approved reorganization; or
- a DOT or operating administration approved budget or FTE reduction; or
- other proposed separations but for cause (i.e., performance or conduct reasons) or for legislatively mandated separation

In order to provide consistency within DOT, operating administrations must give each employee they designate as surplus a "Certification of Surplus Status" (CSS). A CSS must be issued within 30 days of determination that an employee is surplus, and will be good for up to 6 months; certifications may be renewed in increments of up to 6 months each for as long as the employee is surplus. A CSS must contain the following information: the employee's name; title, series, grade, and promotion potential of the current position; current duty location/commuting area; the reason the employee has been identified as surplus; the date of issuance and the date of expiration; the specific benefits available to the employee; information about orientation to transition assistance (see section on Career Transition Assistance below); and any other information the operating administration wishes to include. The CSS must be signed by an official who may also authorize a RIF. The CSS will be the official documentation provided by the employee when applying for a vacancy under the DOT Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP).

## **CONTENTS OF THE PROGRAM**

The DOT Career Transition Program consists of three components: career transition assistance, retraining, and mandatory placement.

### **Career Transition Assistance**

Career transition assistance will be available to all displaced and surplus employees in the competitive, excepted, and senior executive services; in addition, transition assistance will be made available on a space available basis to former DOT employees separated through RIF and to spouses of DOT employees facing relocation to another geographic area.

Transition assistance will consist of the following types of services: skills assessment, career counseling, networking, job information, work life programs, employee assistance program, financial planning, etc. In addition, training in the following basic skills will be available to displaced or surplus employees: computer literacy, communications, and problem solving. The DOT Training Council is responsible for developing the core curriculum for these three basic skills areas and identifying the available method(s) of delivery. Operating administrations are responsible for ensuring that their displaced or surplus employees have access to these services. The core philosophy of the career transition assistance component is that it have the flexibility to meet the individual needs of affected employees. Therefore, the specific services needed/utilized by an employee will vary depending on his or her individual circumstances and future plans. The DOT Career Transition Coordinator is responsible for working with the operating administrations to coordinate the delivery of career transition assistance across intermodal lines whenever possible.

Operating administrations are responsible for working with their employees to identify the most effective method of delivery of transition assistance. For example, in Washington

headquarters the DOT CONNECTION may serve as the primary source for service delivery. During initial implementation of the program, the DOT CONNECTION will also be available to provide basic career transition information to all employees through its job line and call back services. It will also provide information concerning the Employee Assistance Program, as well as provide a general resource document on career transition.

In field facilities located in metropolitan areas, or co-located with other DOT facilities, efforts should be made to work cooperatively to identify available sources of transition assistance. DOT components in areas where there is a Federal Executive Board or a Federal Executive Association should participate in local efforts to promote interagency cooperation. Employees in remote field facilities may receive services via remote learning methods, videos, telephonic career counseling, and the like. However, every effort should be made to provide in-person assistance to employees when resources so permit.

The linchpin of the transition assistance program is employee orientation to the services available. Therefore, before receiving transition assistance services through DOT, a displaced or surplus employee must attend an orientation to available services. Employees who choose to receive transition services outside DOT need not attend an orientation. The orientation should include information on what services are available, when and how to obtain them, and whom to contact for further information. Employees who receive a RIF separation notice must receive this orientation within 2 working days of the notice. Employees who receive a Certification of Expected Separation (CES) under the provisions of 5 CFR 351 or a CSS must receive the orientation within 10 working days of receipt of the CES or CSS.

### **Retraining**

For the purpose of this program, retraining is defined as training and other development needed to close skills gaps or to equip employees for transition into a new occupation. Retraining may be provided to all surplus and displaced employees prior to actual separation.

Before an integrated retraining effort can be undertaken, the DOT Training Council will initiate an assessment of the kinds of skills needed by the Department in the future. The results of this assessment will be analyzed against the skills of displaced and surplus employees with the intent of retraining those employees when possible to close identified skills gaps. Retraining efforts should be aligned with the DOT strategic vision.

The success of retraining as a tool for minimizing the impact of downsizing, reorganization, and realignment depends heavily on the support of top management, as well as a commitment by supervisors and managers at all levels to be creative and expansive in their use of existing mechanisms for effective retraining. Therefore, in support of retraining, managers should make every effort to fully utilize existing mechanisms to cross-train employees, e.g., mentoring, details and rotational assignments, courses, partnerships with educational institutions, etc. Every effort should be made to tap into the skills and knowledge of current employees in the design and presentation of training courses.


In the longer term, the Departmental Office of Personnel will coordinate exploration of new mechanisms to utilize external resources for retraining, such as partnerships with private industry, additional cooperative ventures with educational institutions, job loss insurance, and the like. Also to be explored will be the possibility of centralized funding for retraining, which would facilitate cross-training between and among the operating administrations. However, it is recognized that these kinds of efforts have both legal and budgetary ramifications, and will have to be carefully staffed out.

## **Mandatory Placement**

The mandatory placement component of the DOT program applies to employees in the competitive service only. It is consistent with the Governmentwide regulations on the Career Transition Assistance Program, the Reemployment Priority List, and the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program contained in 5 CFR 330. Specific details about the DOT administration of these programs are contained in DPM Letter 330-7, Mandatory Placement Programs for Displaced and Surplus Employees and DPM Letter 330-8, DOT Reemployment Priority List.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH EMPLOYEES**

At least annually the Secretary will issue a "State of the Department" message to all employees giving them a realistic assessment of the status of downsizing, reorganization, and realignment in the Department, as well as an assessment of related budgetary and other issues. At least annually the heads of the operating administrations will issue a companion "State of the Operating Administration" message to their own employees.



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Director of Personnel