

Transport Skills Academy will help to fill 60,000 transport jobs over next 10 years

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Transport Skills Academy (TSA) is urging people in the West Midlands to consider a career in transport this National Apprenticeship Week.

By 2035, the West Midlands will need to fill nearly 60,000 new jobs in order to operate its growing rail, road, bus and tram networks. The TSA was founded by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) in 2022 to meet this demand, providing a one-stop destination, and inspiring the future workforce to choose a career in transport while upskilling its existing workforce.

TSA stated that apprenticeships are key to addressing the skills gap, as they provide an 'earn while you learn' option for those looking to develop their careers. TfWM currently employs apprentices across a range of programmes in different areas of the business, including health and safety, project management, business administration, digital and data, chartered manager and senior leader, with more apprenticeships planned.

After identifying the skills shortage and rising demand, the TSA fostered working relationships with organisations across the region. This includes Birmingham City Council, Wolverhampton City Council, Black

Country Transport, Midland Metro Alliance and West Midlands Combined Authority – all of which have embraced and supported transport-related apprenticeships.

After working in retail for five years, Birmingham resident Keya Allen wanted a career that offered job security and opportunities. She joined an eight-week junior software development skills bootcamp, and on completion, secured a job at TfWM.

Keya is now doing a higher apprenticeship in DevOps, learning a wide range of skills from upgrading databases to looking after the road traffic collisions data downloader. Her enthusiasm and thirst for learning was recognised just last month, with Keya named as West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Apprentice of the Year.

Transport for West Midlands colleagues are currently receiving transport-related training and are encouraged to learn at all stages of their career journey. Catherine Rooney, project officer at TfWM, undertook an associate project management apprenticeship to strengthen her skillset and experience. Following completion of her apprenticeship, Catherine had the opportunity to lead a project creating an Active Travel Centre of Excellence, supporting the TSA's work, inspiring new entrants into a career in active travel.

In the last year, Birmingham City Council offered two level six transport planning degree apprenticeships and successfully filled both roles. The transport planning team has hugely benefitted from bringing young people into their team to share their learnings and ideas from their degree courses and are helping to shape the future of the sector.

When asked why he decided to start an apprenticeship, apprentice transport planner in the city centre team at Birmingham City Council, Ben Butler, said: "I believe that an apprenticeship is an ideal way to establish a solid foundation within a career. The structured nature of apprenticeships allows for ample opportunities for continuous development and learning, which helps to facilitate the transition into professional working without overwhelming pressure."

Wolverhampton City Council found similar experiences when employing apprentices with Black Country Transport, who offer two positions annually alongside two graduate placements. Employers found that the individuals coming through apprenticeship schemes were able to improve the overall skill base of the transport team over time, and they are looking to expand on this in future years.

Emily Cooper, transport planner degree apprentice at Black Country Transport, added: "This apprenticeship is a great opportunity to gain skills in design and writing, communicating, negotiating, project management, taking the lead on smaller tasks within a wider project and working for the best outcome for everybody. You can progress to many jobs using the skills and experience gained here." Emily splits her time working between Wolverhampton, Sandwell, and Birmingham.

The Midland Metro Alliance, who consists of the WMCA and a joint venture consortium of construction and design partners, has also been working with TfWM since 2016 to deliver apprenticeships in a range of roles and at varying levels, including leading a group which created the first apprenticeship in the country sharing the skills and knowledge required to deliver light rail projects.

Rose Rees, head of engagement and skills, Midland Metro Alliance, commented: “We’ve got some fantastic people retiring but they’re taking with them their skills, knowledge and experience, so we need to encourage new people to come into our sector, young people as well, particularly, to bring their innovation, their fresh ideas, and learn from the people that are currently in the sector.

“In addition to a variety of interesting roles at site, at Midland Metro Alliance, we have welcomed numerous apprentices in our offices ranging from level two customer service technicians, through to Level Two and Three business admin, marketing, to Level Six-degree apprentices who are working as quantity surveyors out of our site in Dudley.”

On the successes of the TSA to date, Michele Roberts, head of transport skills at TfWM, said: “At the Transport Skills Academy, we are on a mission to challenge perceptions of the transport sector, and inspire people – no matter their age or background – into a career in the sector. Apprenticeships are a valuable gateway for anyone looking to develop their skills and learn on the job.

“Through working collaboratively with our partners and providing people with resources and guidance, we’re able to connect them with the right opportunities to support their career development – both within TfWM and across the region. We encourage you to get in touch with us if you’re interested in pursuing an apprenticeship or furthering your career.”

To learn more, visit the [Transport Skills Academy website](#).