



Connecting Career Pathways (CCP) Program

2025 Program Review



April 13, 2026

2025 Program Review Introduction: Glossary of Key Terms

Below are key terms defined as used in this Connecting Career Pathways (CCP) 2025 Program Review.

Term	Definition for Purpose of 2025 Program Review
CTE	Career and Technical Education: CTE programs offer a sequence of courses that provide students with coherent and rigorous content. CTE content is aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare for further education and careers in current or emerging professions.
Gaps	Needs, themes, and findings that emerged from the interview data analysis.
IDI	In-depth interview: Structured discussions with stakeholders to gather experiences and professional perspectives related to the CCP Program.
Pathway	A structured sequence of high school courses and work-based learning designed to prepare students for high-wage, in-demand careers.
Stakeholder	Any education, workforce, or industry professional who was interviewed to collect data for this report.

CCP Program Vision and Purpose

Vision Statement:

CCP fosters a future where K-12 students are inspired to pursue dynamic careers in transportation to keep Texas moving.

To achieve this vision, CCP:

- Focuses on delivering statewide, regionally relevant career awareness and exploration activities, especially in areas with limited access.
- Emphasizes early, age-appropriate exposure to transportation infrastructure careers.
- Conducts periodic reviews to understand evolving workforce needs and gaps across Texas' transportation ecosystem, including education, industry, and workforce partners.

Why Early Career Awareness Matters for Transportation Infrastructure Careers

Practices point to the value of introducing career awareness and exploration at earlier ages to build interest in careers that are often hard to fill. Early exposure to transportation infrastructure careers can support student interest over time.

Why Focus on Early Exploration?

Children begin forming ideas about which careers are “for them” as early as age seven.*

- Many programs target middle and high school students, missing a **critical window for early influence**.
- Early exposure builds awareness of transportation infrastructure careers **before misconceptions form**.
- Students gain early clarity on career pathways, preparing them to make **informed choices** in high school.
- K-5 career awareness supports **proactive career decision-making** when it’s time to do so.

Regional Footprint

TxDOT’s CCP Program can reach K-5 students in Texas’ harder-to-access regions.

- TxDOT has the **regional networks, resources, and contractor relationships** that enable the CCP Program’s K-5 programming to scale statewide.
- CCP delivers **region-specific solutions** to address unique challenges in engaging K-5 students across Texas.
- Participation in CCP programs is exploratory and does not limit students’ future education or career choices.

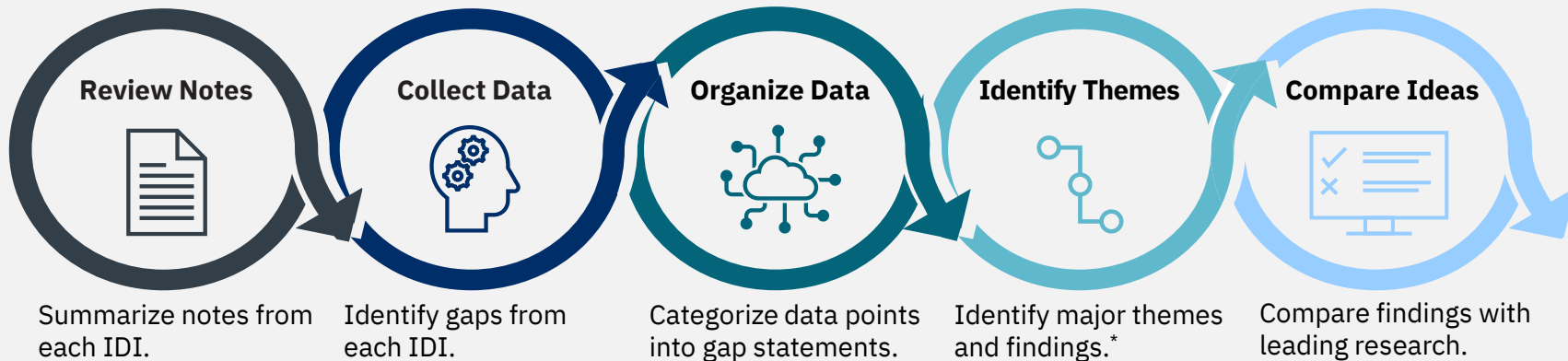
Transportation Infrastructure Career Focus

Similar career awareness and exploration programs often focus on other or multiple in-demand careers.

- CCP focuses exclusively on **supporting transportation infrastructure career awareness and exploration**.
- Early awareness in K-5 can help students understand **existing pathways** that lead to these careers, as transportation infrastructure careers lack a dedicated career and technical education (CTE) pathway.
- CCP’s transportation infrastructure focus ensures its **programming is aligned to workforce needs**.

The Process for Capturing Insights and Analysis for the CCP Program Review

CCP conducted in-depth interviews (IDIs) to assess current conditions, identify gaps, and explore opportunities to expand the program. The interviews captured participants' experiences and perspectives related to transportation career awareness and preparation. Qualitative insights from the interviews informed this report through a five-step analysis process.



*Findings reflect themes from IDIs, not survey results or statewide polling.

CCP Program Stakeholder Perspectives

Between August 2024 and November 2025, CCP conducted 81 IDIs with a broad range of stakeholders across Texas to inform this report. Participants included K-12 and postsecondary educators, workforce and economic development professionals, industry representatives and TxDOT staff from multiple Divisions.

145 Stakeholders interviewed

IDI participants were selected based on their connection to the CCP Program and **represented education, industry, and workforce** partnerships. Stakeholders were **geographically distributed** across Texas and provided their **regional perspectives** on transportation infrastructure workforce needs, which informed the gap analysis.

11 TxDOT Divisions

Of TxDOT's 34 Divisions, **16 were prioritized for initial outreach** based on their alignment with CCP, and CCP was able to **conduct IDIs with 11** of them to deepen understanding of transportation workforce needs.

81 IDIs conducted

Key Gaps Impacting Student Access to Transportation Infrastructure Career Pathways (1 of 2)

Insights gathered through IDIs were analyzed and categorized into 13 gap areas, reflecting common themes identified and priority needs.

Gap Statements
Gap 1: Students do not always complete the Summer Transportation Camps (STC) due to transportation issues to the camps.
Gap 2: School systems must bolster industry partnerships to build offerings, secure resources, and streamline marketing efforts in transportation infrastructure-related CTE programs.
Gap 3: Enrolled students do not always complete transportation infrastructure-related CTE programs of study.
Gap 4: Key stakeholders lack access to strong and consistent relationships with TxDOT.
Gap 5: School systems often lack qualified staff and coherent programs of study to implement quality transportation infrastructure-related CTE pathways.
Gap 6: It is difficult to start, sustain, and scale transportation infrastructure-related CTE programs due to funding challenges.
Gap 7: Entering transportation careers can be difficult for high school students who lack workforce readiness.

Taken together, Gaps 1-7 indicate that students' access to, and ability to succeed in, transportation infrastructure career pathways is shaped by a combination of barriers, program capacity, partnerships, and funding rather than a single factor.

Key Gaps Impacting Student Access to Transportation Infrastructure Career Pathways (2 of 2)

Insights gathered through IDIs were analyzed and categorized into 13 gap areas, reflecting common themes identified and priority needs.

Gap Statements
Gap 8: Students might not envision themselves in the transportation infrastructure industry.
Gap 9: Educational and workforce programs lack standardized processes and support to access, interpret, and apply longitudinal data.
Gap 10: Success in transportation infrastructure-related careers requires industry-aligned curriculum and technical instruction with embedded employability skills.
Gap 11: Parents, students, and key education stakeholders lack awareness and understanding of transportation infrastructure careers.
Gap 12: Barriers to meaningful K-12 exploration of and preparation for transportation infrastructure careers include competing priorities, access to resources, persistent misconceptions, and ineffective program marketing.
Gap 13: Rural areas lack access to resources and shared services to address and successfully scale transportation infrastructure-related programs.

Gaps 8-13 indicate that challenges related to awareness, coordination, and access further influence how students and families understand transportation infrastructure careers and engage with available programs.

Common Career Awareness Practices Supporting Transportation Infrastructure in CTE and State Departments of Transportation (DOT)

To help interpret themes from stakeholder interviews, CCP conducted research and facilitated discussions with CTE programs and DOTs in other states to understand common approaches to K-12 transportation career awareness and exploration. These examples provide context for the findings and illustrate practices used nationwide.

Transportation Infrastructure CTE Practices	Texas	Arizona	Colorado	Michigan	New York	Ohio
Career exploration opportunities in K-12	★	★			★	★
State-level investments in CTE	★	★	★	★	★	★
Executive or Legislative backing	★	★	★	★	★	★
Comprehensive transportation career exploration tools	★	★	★	★	★	★

DOT Practices	TxDOT	ADOT	CDOT	MDOT	NYSDOT	ODOT
Dedicated K-12 transportation infrastructure workforce program	★					★
Summer Transportation Camp offerings	★	★	★	★		
AASHTO STEM offerings through DOT	★			★		
DOT internships or seasonal employment	★	★			★	★
DOT-hosted competitions, activities, courses, lesson plans			★	★	★	★
Professional development and teacher training				★		★

The examples shared are illustrative only and are not intended to evaluate, rank, or assess state or DOT practices.

Connecting Career Pathways Program's Focus for the Year Ahead

- **Prioritize focus areas** by aligning communication and engagement efforts to the most significant gaps and needs identified through stakeholder input.
- **Refine messaging and outreach** to better resonate with priority audiences, using themes surfaced through interviews and peer program insights.
- **Target activities and resources** toward Districts, Divisions, and partners where gaps and opportunities are greatest.
- **Incorporate leading practices** from similar state programs into CCP tools, playbooks, and engagement approaches.
- **Inform short-term actions and longer-term planning**, supporting continuous improvement of K-12 transportation career awareness and exploration efforts.