

Who we are:

Transportation is so basic that many of us overlook its overwhelming importance in our daily lives. Practically everything used in our homes, offices, or schools across Tennessee – from furniture to food items to clothing – requires a large and complex transportation network. The Tennessee Department of Transportation provides citizens of Tennessee and travelers with one of the best transportation systems in the country. TDOT is a multimodal agency with responsibilities in building and maintaining roads, aviation, public transit, waterways, railroads, cycling and walking. Our involvement ranges from airport improvements to funding transit buses to planning for river ports. The Department of Transportation has approximately 3,500 employees with four statewide region facilities in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Jackson.



Freight Planning & Safety Oversight Technical Specialist

Passenger Transportation, Rail and Freight Division – Freight, Rail Safety & Rail Engineering Section
\$60,600 - \$70,680 annually

Job Overview

The Freight Planning & Safety Oversight Technical Specialist is a subject matter expert responsible for overseeing freight planning & safety initiatives across Tennessee's multimodal transportation network. This role supports strategic planning, policy development, data analysis, interagency coordination, and funding integration to ensure that freight systems are safe, efficient, and aligned with economic development goals. The position plays a critical leadership role in coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies, managing freight-related programs and grants, and mentoring junior staff within the Freight Planning team.

This position is critical in evaluating Tennessee's freight infrastructure, advancing multimodal planning efforts, and supporting grant initiatives and corridor studies. The Specialist series works collaboratively within a matrix organization, interfacing with regional staff, MPOs/RPOs, and private freight stakeholders to help shape data-driven freight mobility, safety, and economic development strategies.

The Freight Planning & Safety Oversight Technical Specialist will grasp a basic knowledge of the implementation of the TDOT Rail Transit Safety Program Standard through the execution of risk-based inspections in line with National Public Transportation Safety Plan, Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP), Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (PTSCTP) and 49 U.S.C Chapter 53 and related state laws. This position will proactively assist in identifying required procedures and compliance measures to assist Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) in implementing their Agency Safety Plans (ASP), the TDOT SSOA program and Federal requirements.

Essential Job Duties of the Technical Specialist I, II, and III include:

Assist in gathering and organizing freight-related data (e.g., truck volumes, commodity flow, crash data). Develop skills in utilizing planning tools such as Freight Analysis Framework (FAF), TranSearch, GIS software, and Excel-based freight models. Support analysis of freight network conditions, trends, and performance metrics.

Maintain and update the State Freight Plan components and regional freight studies. Support the development of freight corridor profiles and assessments. Contribute to the internal documentation of freight priorities in long-range transportation plans and studies.

Provide administrative support for freight-related funding programs (e.g., National Highway Freight Program (NHFP), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)). Assist with research, data entry, and drafting of sections for grant applications or federal reports.

Draft meeting notes, data summaries, and internal memos related to freight projects. Ensure all planning documents follow TDOT's quality assurance and records retention standards.

Read, interpret, and apply statutes, regulations, policies, (e.g. FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act), 23 U.S. Code § 167 – National Highway Freight Program (NHFP), 49 U.S. Code § 70101–70204 – Multimodal Freight Transportation, and TDOT State Freight Plan) standards, grant language requirements, contract requirements, and funding applications.

Perform financial reporting and documentation activities to ensure compliance with contract requirements.

Maintain organized records of coordination activities, agreements, and approvals. Assist in developing contract special provisions related to freight movements and logistics. Assist in tracking project schedules to ensure freight-related deliverables are completed on time. Prepare reports, charts, and graphs to present data to support internal coordination and decision making.

Provide exceptional customer service to internal and external customers by exercising effective listening skills, providing prompt responses, maintaining complete and accurate documentation, and communicating effectively. Coordinate with internal TDOT disciplines (e.g., Environmental, ROW, Project Management) to relay railroad requirements and updates. Assist with scheduling meetings, taking meeting notes, and updating team logs. Attend site reviews with railroads, contractors, and TDOT Regions, and operate light-duty vehicles as needed.

Assist the Senior Technical Specialist in enforcing compliance through Corrective Action Plans. Assist in addressing and resolving comments from Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) and rail authorities under the guidance of the Senior Technical Specialist and certified consultants. Assist in the process of attaining certification in the Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (PTSCTP).

Assist as a liaison on all matters regarding rail-fixed guideway systems between the Regional Transit Authorities (RTA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in alignment with TDOT's risk-based inspection program. Assist with applying training and certification to work with consultants and the FTA on guidance to ensure compliance with all state and federal laws governing RTA fixed-guideway operations.

Additional Job Duties for the Technical Specialist II and III include:

Analyze freight movement trends and supply chain performance using tools such as Freight Analysis Framework (FAF), TranSearch, weigh-in-motion (WIM) data, and TDOT freight databases. Assist in identifying freight bottlenecks, safety hazards, and infrastructure needs across truck, rail, and intermodal networks. Contribute to developing freight performance metrics, dashboards, and mapping products.

Support updates to the State Freight Plan and ensure alignment with federal guidance (e.g., FAST Act, IIJA). Assist in implementing freight strategies identified in TDOT corridor studies and long-range transportation plans. Interpret and apply freight planning policy, environmental considerations, and funding eligibility criteria.

Assist in preparing project justifications, narratives, and data summaries for freight-related grant applications such as: INFRA, RAISE, NHFP, and CMAQ. Help track program performance and reporting for federally funded freight

initiatives. Coordinate with internal finance and program staff to align funding strategies with freight project development timelines.

Participate in stakeholder meetings, technical committees, and project team discussions to represent freight priorities. Support engagement activities and public outreach efforts related to freight planning & safety projects.

Assist in updating freight planning tools, templates, and guidance documents. Contribute to developing internal freight program workflows, timelines, and reporting protocols. Document findings, meeting notes, and coordination outcomes following TDOT quality assurance standards.

Communicate with external stakeholders, local government agencies, contractors, consulting and regulating agencies (FHWA, FTA, etc.), and consultants to address prequalification, contracts, compliance, and invoice processing issues. Support team members and share insights on the best practices and standards of railroad coordination.

Coordinate and facilitate agreements with governmental agencies, consultants, contractors, and external partners to address and resolve impacts that support the effective development and execution of grants, contracts, projects, and programs.

Perform consultant prequalification, selection, invoice processing, and performance assessments.

Maintain a thorough understanding of RTA operations and conduct both scheduled and unscheduled audits of RTA activities within Tennessee. Monitor Safety Management System (SMS) reports and prepare internal comments and recommendations to address potential safety risks. Assist in drafting internal reviews and comments for RTA Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans. Support the preparation of the initial draft of the TDOT SSO Annual Report for submission to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Maintain accurate and complete records with all parties involved in the SSO program to ensure compliance and accountability.

Additional Job Duties for the Technical Specialist III include:

Guide the development and periodic updates of the State Freight Plan, ensuring compliance with FAST Act/IJA requirements. Develop policies, procedures, and strategies that improve freight corridors' mobility, reliability, and safety. Identify freight trends, supply chain disruptions, and infrastructure needs to inform statewide and regional planning efforts.

Conduct and oversee analysis of freight movement data (e.g., truck volumes, rail intermodal flow, bottlenecks, truck travel time reliability). Develop, monitor, adjust and report performance measures related to freight mobility, safety, and environmental impacts.

Manage freight-related federal and state grant programs such as INFRA, RAISE, CMAQ, and National Highway Freight Program (NHFP). Oversee the development of project justifications, benefit-cost analyses, and funding strategies. Assist local agencies and MPOs with applications and compliance for freight infrastructure improvements.

Serve as TDOT's freight liaison with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs), private sector freight operators, port authorities, and railroads. Participate in national and regional freight working groups (e.g., AASHTO committees, TRB panels). Serve and assist with coordinating and attending Freight Advisory Committee meetings.

Mentor and provide technical support to Technical Specialists I and II. Review technical work products for accuracy, consistency, and alignment with TDOT goals. Lead continuous improvement efforts, update freight guidance materials, and contribute to staff development programs.

Prepare recommendations and contribute to the initial draft of the TDOT SSO Annual Report for submission to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Complete required training to develop subject matter expertise on SSO issues at the national level and maintain active certification through participation in FTA-sponsored training consistent with Tennessee's operational needs. Participate in calls and meetings with other state SSO agencies to exchange best practices and present recommendations for implementation in Tennessee. Conduct quarterly risk-based inspections of rail fixed guideway systems to ensure safety compliance and continuous improvement.

Qualifications

TDOT Technical Specialist I

- Bachelor's Degree

TDOT Technical Specialist II

- Bachelor's Degree
- 1 year of demonstrated competency in freight planning, safety, transportation policy, infrastructure management, or a related field.

TDOT Technical Specialist III

- Bachelor's Degree
- 2 years of demonstrated competency in freight planning, safety, transportation policy, infrastructure management, or a related field.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation reserves the sole right in determining the level of position based on the applicant's work experience, education, skill level, level of FTA public transportation safety certification, and all other appropriate factors, including business needs. Within 6 months of hire, employees must demonstrate successful mastery of corresponding work competencies and skill blocks of the Technical Specialist Competency Program for the level of worker for which they were hired. If skills and competencies are not met during that period, the employee can be demoted to the level of worker for which he/she is qualified.

Ideal Candidate

The Freight Planning & Safety Oversight Technical Specialist is a curious and motivated professional who thrives in collaborative environments and values public service. They approach their work with a strong sense of responsibility, attention to detail, and a commitment to continuous learning. Naturally inquisitive, they are eager to grow in their understanding of how their contributions impact communities, the logistics footprint and infrastructure across Tennessee. They bring a positive attitude, adapt well to change, and build strong working relationships across diverse teams. With a thoughtful and forward-looking mindset, they are driven to make meaningful contributions and support others in achieving shared goals.