

## Internship Opportunities Train New Generation of Public Transportation Employees



DRPT funds several internship and training opportunities every year. In FY23, DRPT allocated \$257,440 to support nine internships at transit companies.

In FY23, the Greater Lynchburg Transit Company (GLTC) hosted an intern, Liberty University student Jordan Romano, who developed an artificial intelligence chat tool to provide riders with 24/7 customer service with information about bus schedules and stops.

"I sought an internship where I could make a positive impact in my local community," Romano said. "The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company offered me that opportunity."

Romano said he came up with the idea for a chatbot after observing how the service representatives dealt with many valid but repetitive questions from riders. He also wanted riders to have the ability to ask questions outside of normal business hours.

"AskGLTC is valuable to riders because of its 24/7 customer service coverage, ability to provide accurate live bus data and answer many common questions about fares and policies," Romano said. "GLTC's bus service is critical to many riders and many rely on it to get to work, AskGLTC was developed to make commute easier by providing access to relevant information with a simple click of a button."

DRPT provides funding for operating expenses for eligible public transportation services, including local bus, commuter bus, commuter rail, light rail, bus rapid transit, demand response, paratransit, and ferry services. DRPT follows a performance-based methodology to determine the allocation of operating assistance funds to each agency. The program funds no more than 30 percent