

Student ID: 2210357	Student Name: KAYLA HALMAGHI
Working Title: Collaboration between the Automotive and Public Transit Sectors to Enhance Workforce Training and Development Opportunities in Detroit, Michigan, USA	
Outline of Topic with Rationale for doing it: The question I plan to answer in my dissertation is, how can cross-industry collaboration between the public transit and automotive sectors enhance workforce training and development opportunities in Detroit, Michigan? Detroit is often known as the “Motor City” because it is a large manufacturing hub for the mass production of automobiles. Due to many factors, including increased global competition, the once dominant Detroit automotive companies have lost ground in recent decades. The economy in Detroit is lacking diversification outside of the automotive industry, which means job opportunities and the overall economy have suffered as a result of the market share decline (Millington, 2021). Detroit’s singular focus on the automotive industry and high private car ownership rates have hindered Detroit’s development of public transit, in addition to many other factors. As public demand and environmental sustainability needs surmount, a grand opportunity exists for the automotive companies of Detroit to lead the collaboration with the public transit sector for mutually beneficial and sustainable growth. This collaboration can create public transit development, workforce training opportunities, and more jobs for automotive workers in Michigan. The downfall of automotive job opportunities in Michigan is summarized well in this excerpt from a 1986 New York Times article: <i>“The reason, analysts say, is the increasing share of the market captured by imports and the shifting of supplier jobs to other locations. There was a great shakeout in the auto industry in this state starting in 1979, said David Verway, a professor of business administration at Wayne State University. We lost a great deal of industrial capacity. These were not just layoffs; the plants were permanently closed.” (Holusha , 1986)</i> A full recovery never happened after the downfall started in the late 1970’s. In 2013, the city government of Detroit became the largest city in the USA to declare bankruptcy. At a median income of \$27,838 USD, Detroit is the poorest city in the country with a population over 100,000 (World Population Review, 2024). There are glaring socio-economic issues in the city. The diminishing automotive industry and lack of economic diversification and adaptability have played a part in these issues, but the industry now has an opportunity to be part of the solution. The automotive industry of metropolitan Detroit collaborating with the public transit sector will not solve all of the socio-economic challenges in the city, however, it can serve as a positive step forward in environmental sustainability and future-proofing the local economy. The four main themes that I will focus on to achieve this thesis are outlined below:	

Communities of Practice

The aim is to explore how knowledge sharing and cross-training between the automotive and public transit sectors can have a positive impact on the people and economy of metropolitan Detroit. The objective of this study is to find opportunities for enhancing the workforce, streamlining operational processes and efficiencies, and developing the local economy. Supporting objectives:

- Link communities of practice with talent development, job opportunities, and economic development.
- Create new job opportunities for talent that has lost their jobs due to automotive business leaving Michigan (Eberts & Kline, 2012).
- Foster training, development, and community engagement in a sustainable way that benefits local companies, workers, and residents of Detroit.
- Engage with NGOs, local government, and universities to enhance communities of practice opportunities related to this theme and objective.

Shared Value to Create Community and Business Resilience

The aim is to demonstrate why the thesis topic can have both social and economic benefits for metropolitan Detroit. The objective of this study is to demonstrate the opportunities for social well-being, job creation, enhanced workforce skills, and economic resilience. Supporting objectives:

- Demonstrate how this theme will increase market share for Detroit automotive companies. Rising global competition has diminished market share, and given the lack of industry diversification in the local economy, this has had a negative impact on the job market and financial well-being of the city and its people (Eberts & Kline, 2012).
- Show how this can create adaptability, longevity, stabilization, and economic diversification.
- Examine the role of sustainability and technology in training and development, and how they can drive innovation and competitiveness (Shahzad et al., 2022).

The Circular Economy

The aim is to show how the circular economy can benefit automotive companies. The objective of this study is to show how the Detroit automotive industry can integrate the circular economy into their business operations, while demonstrating the positive social, environmental and economic impact.

Supporting objectives:

- Determine how integrating the circular economy into business operations can create value for automotive companies (Lewandowski, 2016).
- Examine areas where public transit opportunities can be incorporated into the automotive circular economy and how it can lead to increased innovation and new avenues of sustainable revenue.
- Transitioning to a circular economy can create new jobs and training opportunities for employees. This can give workers new skills and opportunities to future-proof their careers and create financial stability (Sulich & Sołoducho-Pelc, 2021).

Driving Sustainability and Engagement through Stakeholder Involvement

The aim is to examine how stakeholder involvement can drive sustainability and engagement in the business and community. The objective is to find ways in which stakeholders can drive engagement within their own organizations and the broader community to drive collaboration and sustainability.

Supporting objectives:

- Identify the main stakeholders. The thesis focus is Detroit's largest automotive manufacturers: General Motors, Ford, and Stellantis (formerly Chrysler).
- Utilize research from the course to discuss how these companies can use sustainable leadership to achieve the thesis objectives.
- Explore how sustainability can drive technological innovation, employee engagement and

development (Poorani & Krishnan, 2021).

- Show how a collaboration between automotive companies and the public transit sector will help them future-proof their business.
- Demonstrate the economic value of sustainability and social responsibility (Stefan et al., 2012).
- Other stakeholders and/or partners of this collaboration:
 - The big three automotive companies of Detroit and the large ecosystem of automotive suppliers in metro Detroit
 - Public transit organizations
 - In Detroit, the main ones are: Detroit Department of Transportation, SMART (Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation), Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA), Detroit Transportation Corporation
 - Automotive workers
 - Applicable union organizations
 - United Auto Workers (UAW): the largest union for automotive workers in the US
 - Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU): the largest union for transportation workers in the US
 - City, county, state, and national government
 - NGOs / non-profit organizations
 - Michigan Works Association, Michigan Workforce Hub, Hope Network Workforce Development, Michigan Mobility Talent Consortium, and Michigan Mobility Institute
 - Research universities in Michigan
 - University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Wayne State University

Indicative Literature (Theoretical ideas being used or tested e.g. circular economy):

Below are four theoretical themes that I will use to support the aims and objectives listed above. I have also listed potential references for researching these themes.

- The business case for sustainability
 - [The Comprehensive Business Case for Sustainability](#) (Whelan & Fink, 2016)
 - [Business Cases for Sustainability: The Role of Business Model Innovation for Corporate Sustainability](#) (Stefan et al., 2012)
 - [Sustainable Leadership Practices for Enhancing Business Resilience and Performance](#) (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011)
- Circular economy
 - [Designing the Business Models for Circular Economy—Towards the Conceptual Framework](#) (Lewandowski, 2016)
 - [Doughnut economics: 4 Questions for Industry Leaders](#) (Baskin, 2024)
- CP3s (community-centered, public-private partnerships)
 - [How Cities are Reinventing the Public-Private Partnership – Four Lessons from Around the Globe](#) (Lam, 2024)
 - [Rise of Community-Centred Public Private Partnerships \(CP3\)](#) (Lam & Fernández, 2023)
 - [Why aren't more cities and counties embracing public-private partnerships?](#) (Nabers, 2024)

- Other supporting references that are specific to Detroit’s automotive and public transit landscape:
 - [The Derailment of Detroit: Public Transit as a Threat to the Brand of Capitalism](#) (Resnick, 2022)
 - [Tracking the Transition of Michigan's Displaced Auto Workers During Significant Restructuring in the Auto Industry During Significant Restructuring in the Auto Industry](#) (Eberts & Kline, 2012).

Proposed Methodology and Methods:

- Qualitative method
- Collect sample data through in-depth interviews with 8-12 individuals
 - Target key stakeholders and subject matter experts in the following areas: automotive, public transit, government, universities, NGOs
- Find resources / contacts from other cities/countries with successful public transit CP3 collaborations (Gouda and Tiwari, 2022)
- I plan to conduct a PESTLE analysis (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) to guide my research (CIPD, 2024)

GANTT TIMELINE

	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
Research proposal & ethics form							
Background of the study & themes							
Literature review							
Methodology interview questionnaire design							
Conducting interviews							
Transcribing interviews							
Analysis of results							
Interpreting results							
Discussion							

Finalising thesis for review							
Submit thesis							

Color key	
	Pending tasks
	Completed tasks

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