



WONDERSTRUCT

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A quick digest of relevant news, products, and trends making a difference in building, power, and transportation. Pairs nicely with Beams, our blog. [Check out all blogs and newsletters on our site.](#)

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Short-staffed again? Grab a coffee.

Here's what went down this week in AEC, transportation, and energy, plus the real labor outlook heading into 2026, according to boots on the ground.

Construction: Help Wanted (...Everywhere)

The construction labor market is still a **ghost town in a hard hat**. The [latest workforce data](#) shows the industry must attract nearly **499,000 new workers in 2026**, just to meet demand.

[Deloitte's 2025 Engineering & Construction Industry Outlook](#) confirms what everyone is feeling: talent shortage = bad, job openings = worse.

The Western U.S. is feeling it especially hard, with high demand and pressure on housing, transit, and commercial projects. ([BuildingEx on the West](#))

Want the fast version?

We broke down the **Top 10 Most In-Demand Infrastructure Jobs for 2026** so you can see where hiring pressure is hitting hardest and what roles to plan for now.

[Read the full breakdown.](#)

What firms are doing about it:

- **More prefab & modular**, because jobsite labor isn't magically appearing.
[McKinsey on how modular can help address the labor shortage.](#)
- **More automation & robotics**, because productivity has trust issues.
[Construction robotics snapshot.](#)
- **More recruiting from everywhere:** veterans, career-tech programs, re-entry pipelines, community workforce partnerships.
[NCCR workforce development.](#)

Why wages keep climbing

It's not a bad time to go into the construction labor market. Thank the updated [Davis-Bacon prevailing wage rule](#) + local minimum-wage hikes.

Hotspot markets

Mountain West, Texas/Gulf Coast, Southeast, and metros with aggressive housing/transit agendas.

Electrical and mechanical trades are the new coastal real estate: competitive, expensive, and always being outbid.

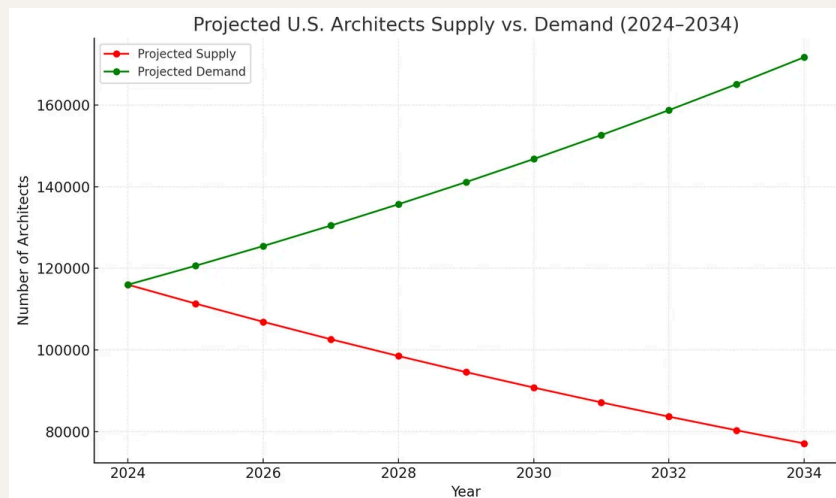
Outlook 2026: Labor demand will remain high, especially in electrical and mechanical trades. Firms leaning into workforce development, apprenticeships, and targeted recruitment pipelines are likely to stay ahead.

Architecture & Design: The 5 to 10-Year Desert

Hunting for mid-career architects? May the odds be ever in your favor.

Firms across the country are starving for people who can run production, coordinate consultants, and keep drawing sets from turning into *fever dreams*.

In 2024, [licensed architects in the US dropped 4%](#). But demand? It's expected to [climb 4% per year](#). For the visual learners among us:



HR nightmare: 100K architect openings.

Architecture's Core Degree Just Lost Its Professional Status

Washington says [architecture isn't a "professional degree" anymore](#). Translation: student loans drop from \$50K a year to \$20.5K. The AIA is not happy. Fewer loans could mean fewer architects down the line, making an already tight job market even tighter.

Where the Pain is Sharpest

Seattle, the Bay Area, Colorado's Front Range, Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, and Florida's rocket-fueled housing markets are feeling it. And [20% of firms with a commercial/industrial specialization report being understaffed](#).

Why it's Happening

A couple big reasons:

- Burnout, staffing gaps, and schedule compression
- A widening **tech skills gap** (BIM, digital twins, AI-assisted drafting) [Autodesk's research on the tech skills gap](#).

Outlook

Architecture needs hybrid **design-tech unicorns** yesterday. If you can model, coordinate, automate, and stay employed longer than 18 months... congrats, you're rare-earth material.

Transportation: Running on Empty (Staffing, Not Fuel)

Welcome to the sector where service levels now depend on **having enough humans** to run things.

Exhibit A: Maintenance & Transit Tech Shortage

- A [recent report](#) finds that roughly 13% of mechanic positions in transit agencies are vacant, and many agencies predict thousands more openings over the next decade.
- In aviation: maintenance-technician shortfalls are growing, with the overall pipeline of trained technicians lagging demand, a pattern forecast to result in a [20% shortfall by 2028](#).

Exhibit B: Air Traffic Control & Airport Ops: Critical Gaps

- The national air-traffic control workforce is still [hundreds \(if not thousands\) of staffers short](#). A coalition of aviation groups recently called for emergency staffing and technology funding to fix what they called a "critical shortfall."
 - Even before 2025's government shutdown, the U.S. aviation system was running critically low on air-traffic controllers. [Over 40% of FAA facilities were already understaffed](#), and headcount was falling while flight volume climbed.
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On Jaime's Radar:

2026 Transportation Trends

Jaime Phillips, our Director of Transportation and GIS, shares what infrastructure teams need to watch next year.

- **AI is double-edged.** Optimizes routing, maintenance, and customer experience but also increases cyber risk for transportation systems.
- **Workforce gaps are real.** Drivers, mechanics, and engineers are in short supply, while demand grows for cybersecurity and data-heavy roles.
- **Complexity meets high expectations.** Supply chain disruptions and extreme weather are more common, but customers still expect real-time updates and reliable service.
- **Adapt to win.** Agencies and logistics firms that leverage AI wisely, build strong referral pipelines, and turn operational complexity into clear messaging will retain staff and earn customer trust.

What's Needed, and Who is in Demand

Electricians, mechanics, signal techs, fleet maintenance... pretty much everyone who keeps things moving, lit, or *not on fire*.

Hot hiring zones

Major airports (DEN, ATL, DFW, ORD, LAX), fast-growing transit cities (Phoenix, Austin, Miami, DC), and freight-heavy regions (Midwest, Texas, Mid-Atlantic).

Emerging skills

EV-charging techs, cybersecurity, fiber, smart mobility, asset management.

Energy: Too Many Projects, Not Enough Electricians

The grid is modernizing. Renewables are scaling. Transmission is multiplying. The labor pool? Not so much.

Everyone is fighting over the same electricians, linemen, controls techs, and commissioning engineers.

The Clean-Energy Hiring Boom

U.S. LNG developers are going modular to dodge labor and cost pressure.

One project moved more than [10 million work-hours off-site to fabrication yards](#).

The Supply Side May Not Be Keeping Up

- The clean energy boom, from renewables to storage to grid upgrades, is adding pressure to staffing pipelines at the same time [many firms report difficulty hiring qualified workers](#).
- Many in-demand energy roles require specialized skills: line-work, substation/relay/controls, SCADA, battery energy storage commissioning, grid integration modeling, etc. These are not quick-to-train entry-level jobs. The demand for “ready-togo” talent could outpace supply.

Where Workers are Needed Most

Texas (solar & wind), Midwest/Plains (wind & transmission), Mid-Atlantic (offshore wind), Mountain West & California (storage & grid mod).

Other Industry news:

Adding to the talent conversation, we lost a legend this month. Frank Gehry, the visionary architect behind the Guggenheim Museum and countless other iconic projects, passed away at 96.

How Wonderstruct Can Help

If all this has you stress-refreshing your applicant tracker, we've got you.

Wonderstruct helps infrastructure teams stay sane (and staffed) with:

- **GIS-powered labor maps** so you know where to hire and where not to waste budget.
- **Training instead of unicorn-hunting.** Turn Revit/BIM/controls training into a real retention tool.
- **Building talent pipelines, not job posts.** 30-60-90 onboarding, role clarity, and career-path storytelling that attract early-career hires.
- **Employer branding.** Culture content, careers pages, and campaigns that speak to electricians, PMs, architects, and field techs in plain English.
- **Fixing the coordination & communication drain.** Clear workflows, client comms, and internal updates that reduce burnout and consultant ping-pong.
- **Forecasting staffing demands with real data.** Pipeline → staffing models → fewer panic hires.
- **Outsourcing what your lean team cannot carry.** Proposals, content, and BD support without stealing production hours.

While the labor market figures itself out, your marketing can still put you ahead.

Wonderstruct News

From Chaos to Clarity: Build Your Safety Program the Right Way

Safety Manual Bootcamp for Construction Teams

January 14, 2026 | 12 p.m. ET

Learn the basics of developing and maintaining a single-source-of-truth construction company safety manual. Capped at 8 people, we work around your existing materials, field technology, and training tools in this half-day workshop.



ALYCE ANDERSON



JAIME PHILLIPS



Presented by the
Wonderstruct team

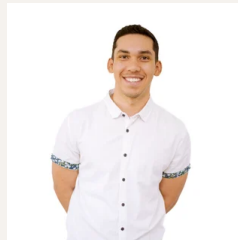


TIM NORTON

Master the art of building a safety program that actually works. Join our half-day training to consolidate scattered policies, eliminate version chaos, and create a single source of truth for your construction safety manual. Learn to audit existing materials, identify regulatory gaps, and leverage AI responsibly in the process. We'll also help you integrate your tech stack—from Procore to custom tools—into an evolving program.

Limited to 8 safety professionals for personalized guidance and hands-on workshops — [reserve yours on Eventbrite](#)

See Your Projects from a New Perspective



Our Creative Manager, Eli Trent, recently captured stunning drone footage for Augusta Homes' new website landing page. The aerial cinematography showcases their craftsmanship and brings their projects to life in ways ground-level photography simply can't match. [View the results.](#)

Curious how drone footage can elevate your construction marketing and project documentation? Eli breaks down 5 proven use cases and real-world lessons in his latest blog, "[How Drones Elevate Construction Projects: 5 Proven Use Cases & Real-World Lessons Learned](#)".

Ready to see your next project from above? [Contact Wonderstruct](#) to get started.

Our Writers



Alyce Anderson

President / CEO

Alyce started Wonderstruct in 2019. In her 16-year construction experience, she recognized a lack of strong communication and communication tools in building construction. Wonderstruct has grown to support the AEC industry, transportation, and energy clients in marketing and telling the world what they build and how they build it in clear, visual ways. Alyce is based in Chicago and Denver.



Jenna Neary

COO

Jenna keeps our operations running smoothly. With a background in project management and content strategy, she brings a smart, creative approach to solving problems and helping clients grow. Jenna's storytelling skills and eye for detail continue to shape how we work and what we deliver. Jenna is based in Atlanta.



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