



Driving Bus Operator Recruitment and Retention: Challenges, Opportunities, and Innovation

National Research



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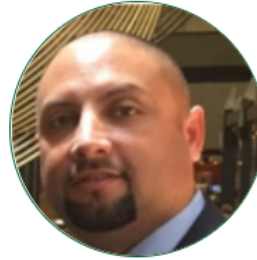
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Industry Practitioner Speakers



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Dallas Area Rapid
Transit (DART)



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Transportation
Superintendent
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Transportation Authority
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Transportation District**



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Executive Director
**National Rural Transit
Assistance Program**

Practitioner's Guide to Bus Operator Workforce Management

Prepared for TCRP F-28, Transportation Research Board of
The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

DRAFT report under review

**Eno Center for Transportation
International Transportation Learning Center
Huber and Associates, Inc.**

Introduction

Bus operators are 60% of the public transit workforce

Many agencies are experiencing difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified operators

50% of bus operators are over 55 (~24% for all workers)

~23,300 transit bus driver jobs need to be filled annually between 2021 and 2031

COVID-19 exacerbated workforce management and development challenges

Case studies

- Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART)
- Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority, WV (FMCTA)
- Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA)
- New Jersey Transit (NJT)
- Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, FL (PSTA)
- River Cities Public Transit, SD (RCPT)
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)

Key elements of bus operator workforce management

Transit Bus Operator Management Elements



Forward-thinking approaches



- Comprehensive analysis to determine staffing needs (AC Transit, Metro Transit)
- Historical experience to develop staffing models (San Diego Transit and Utah Transit Authority)
- Forecasting to determine the optimal workforce size (DART)

Forward-thinking approaches



- Target younger candidates (VTA)
- Offer part-time opportunities on both fixed-route and demand-responsive (Link Transit)
- Outreach to non-English speaking places (DART, Metro Transit)
- Sign-on bonuses & special incentives for applicants with CDL (NJT)

Forward-thinking approaches



- Share healthcare savings with operators (VTA and FMCTA)
- Provide higher wage scales for undesirable shifts
- Shorter wage progression periods (SFMTA, VTA, PSTA)
- Bonuses for unused vacation days (FMCTA)

Forward-thinking approaches



- Pre-hire assessments & additional screening (NJ Transit, GCRTA)
- Communications tech support (NJT)
- CDL permit study sessions (Metro Transit)
- Shorter, flexible application process (Metro Transit, NJT)
- Provide mentor to prepare new employees for first assignments (Sound Transit)

Forward-thinking approaches



- Offering opportunities to learn at own pace (NJT)
- Use experienced operators as OTJ training providers (FMCTA, RCPT)
- Unions can play a needed role in training (VTA, DART)
- Formalize mentorship programs (GCRTA)

Forward-thinking approaches



- Using shields for bus operator compartment
- Allow bus operator input in bus procurement (DART)
- Work with unions to restructure incentives
- Provide comfortable, clean portable restrooms / contract with local business owners for on-route facility access (Metro Transit)

Forward-thinking approaches



- Industry events and competitions (APTA, Eno)
- Transit Driver Appreciation Day (King County)
- Registered apprenticeship programs (VTA)
- Career ladder programs (NY MTA, VTA, LA Metro)
- Consider scheduling changes (GCRTA and DART)

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Driving Bus Operator Recruitment and Retention: Challenges, Opportunities and Innovation

Making Connections 2022
December 13th, 2022

Introduction

- Chris Van Eyken, Program Manager, TransitCenter, Agency Practice

Bus Operators in Crisis

- TransitCenter report detailing bus operator shortfalls
- Pursued this research after reading about pandemic-era labor shortages across the US
- Pre-pandemic, we had begun to look into bus operator job quality
- Research conducted through desk research and interviews with agency staff, current and former operators, union representatives, and transit advocates

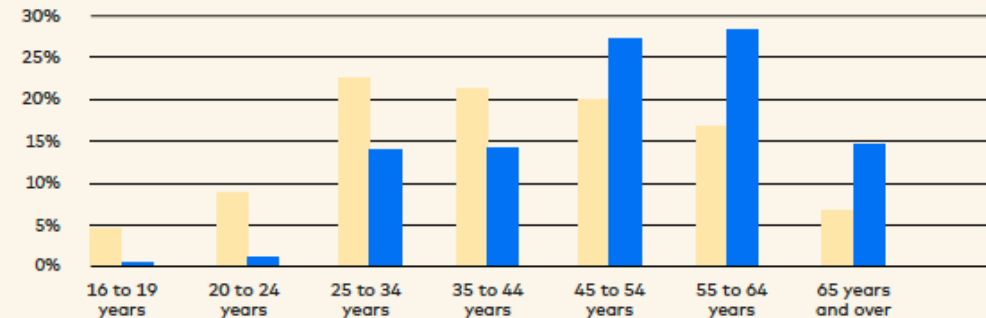
Findings – This is an industry wide issue

- The crisis is affecting agencies of all sizes. APTA survey found 71% of agencies have either had to cut service or delay service increases because of operator shortfalls.
- The problem is multifaceted – there are many causes yet they play out differently from agency to agency
- Today's industry-wide shortfalls were projected by US DOT, DOL, and DOE in 2015 – many agencies saw this coming but could not prevent it

Findings – retirements are a key driver

- A “silver tsunami” is hitting employers across the US economy as baby boomers retire
- Transit workers are older than the average US worker
- Agencies are struggling to recruit and retain enough workers to replace retirees

Figure 1: Percentage of workforce by age



The transit workforce is, on average, older than the American workforce as a whole.¹

■ All workers
■ Bus service and urban transit

Findings – declining job quality hurts attractiveness of position

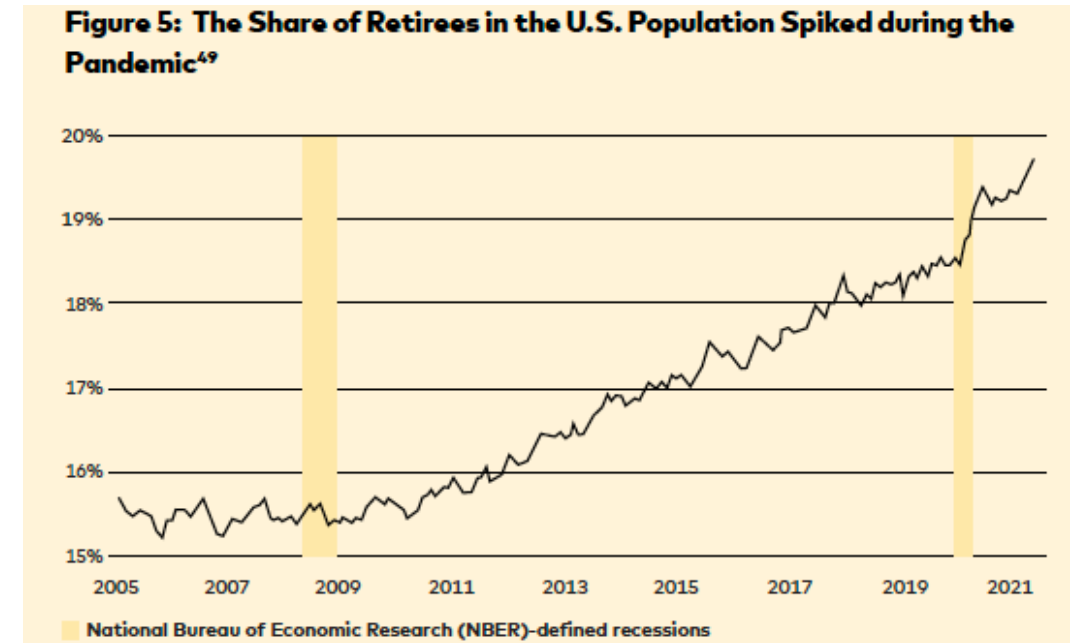
- Pay raises have not kept up with cost of living– especially in transit-rich cities
- Schedules are difficult for operators with childcare and eldercare responsibilities – work-life balance is hard
- Operators assaults are on the rise
- Lack of access to restrooms, adequate break rooms
- At many agencies, operators don't feel management has their backs

Figure 2: Starting hourly salaries for operators in the top 7 transit ridership regions

Agency	Starting Salary (hourly)
MTA NYCT	\$25.49
LA Metro	\$20.49
MBTA (Boston)	\$21.13
SEPTA (Philadelphia)	\$19.55
CTA (Chicago)	\$24.27
SFMTA (San Francisco)	\$29.61
WMATA (DC)	\$25.51

Findings – this is a long-term crisis

- COVID has exacerbated, not caused, operator shortages
- Shortages are causing burnout amongst operators that stay
- Shortages are impacting agencies' ability to recover from the pandemic – multiple agencies have had to respond with service cuts or cancel redesign plans



Recommendations for agencies

1. Rebuild the workforce by getting new recruits in the door: Agencies must make a more compelling pitch to potential hires.
2. Improve hiring processes: Agencies must improve response rates to applications, make the job offer more attractive with signing bonuses, and help applicants obtain CDLs.
3. Provide competitive compensation: Starting salaries must be competitive, and new hires should be on the fast track to median wages in order to improve retention rates.
4. Improve employee facilities: Restroom access and better employee facilities are needed for employee health and wellness.

Recommendations for agencies - continued

5. Support operators in their careers and lives: Operators need better mental health and professional development support.
6. Double-down on operator safety: Agencies must work to create more secure cockpits for operators, and take fare collection off the list of their responsibilities.
7. Provide flexibility in scheduling: Operators must be given greater control over their schedules despite the logistical challenges the change presents to agencies.
8. Listen to operators: Agencies must be more proactive in seeking out operator feedback and identifying workforce issues before they reach a crisis level.

Thanks!

Chris Van Eyken – cvaneyken@transitcenter.org

Dallas Area Rapid Transit Route to Success

**Driving Bus Operator Recruitment & Retention:
Challenges, Opportunities & Innovation**

December 13, 2022

James Duff
AVP, Human Resources



Route to Success



- Background
- Challenges, opportunities, and innovation
 - Recruitment
 - Compensation
- Connecting with our business partners
- Getting results

Thank you!

James Duff

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214-876-0297 (Cell)



DART.org



Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority and ATU Local 265

Joint Workforce Investment (JWI)

Driving Bus Operator Recruitment and Retention:
Challenges, Opportunities, and Innovation

Making Connections Conference
December 13, 2022



- Harpreet Singh-ATU Local 265 JWI Director
- Steve Jovel- VTA Transportation Superintendent/ Apprenticeship Coordinator

Making Connections Conference
December 13, 2022



Joint Workforce Investment (JWI)- Labor Management Partnership between ATU Local 265 and VTA

Key Principles of JWI

Workplace Solutions

Career Development

Public Service

Joint Workforce Investment (JWI)

Worker Voice and Health and Wellness

Worker-to-worker mentoring

Worker Voice

Health and Wellness



Joint Workforce Investment

VTA tools used to improve Employee recruitment and retention; Joint Workforce Investment Partnership (JWI)

- Mentoring Program
- Provides Worker Voice for employees
- Career Ladder
- College credit through Apprenticeship Programs
- Health and wellness focus; including Mental Health



VTA Recruitment Strategies

Post Covid vacancies

Focus on radio ads to specific target groups

Gig Drivers

Under-represented populations

Non-English sources



Joint Workforce Investment

Future recruitment with JWI

Attract candidates earlier

Operator pre-apprenticeship program

Provides employment priority for pre-apprentices

Attract candidates from under-represented populations

Attract candidates from different community pools

Prepares candidates to get through hiring process



Joint Workforce Investment

Questions?



Industry Practitioner Presentation



Julia Castillo
Executive Director
Heart of Iowa Regional
Agency (HIRTa)



Jeff Hazen
Executive Director
Sunset Empire
Transportation District



Operator Recruitment and Retention

Many Small Successes Keep the Buses Rolling
December 13, 2022



Agenda

- Introduction to National RTAP
- TACL: Transportation Technical Assistance Coordination Library
- Pay, Skills, Test Drive the Idea, Eligibility
- National RTAP Resources
- Strategies for Building Strong Transit Culture
- Contact National RTAP for Technical Assistance!

TWC Making Connections 2022



What is National RTAP?

- FTA Section 5311 Formula Grants funded Technical Assistance Center that supports:
 - Rural and Tribal Transit Organizations
 - State RTAP Programs
 - Intercity Bus Providers
- We provide free training and technical assistance resources:
 - eLearning platform with online courses, and training materials available through Resource Library.
 - Webinars, virtual workshops, and conferences.
 - Technology tools to manage websites, GTFS data, and to assist with procurement and financial management.
 - Peer technical assistance network, forums, and roundtables.
 - Comprehensive Resource Center Library with updated products.



TACL: Transportation Technical Assistance Coordination Library



<http://transportation-tacl.org/>

The Transportation Technical Assistance Coordination Library (TACL) provides a sustainable methodology and platform to access rural and tribal transportation coordination resources across a diverse range of transportation technical assistance centers and the [Federal Transit Administration \(FTA\)](#).

The FTA-funded technical assistance centers participating in this ongoing work with links to their coordination resources are:

- [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center \(NADTC\)](#)
- [National Center for Applied Transit Technology \(N-CATT\)](#)
- [National Center for Mobility Management \(NCMM\)](#)
- [National Rural Transit Assistance Program \(National RTAP\)](#)
- [Shared-Use Mobility Center \(SUMC\)](#)
- [Transit Workforce Center \(TWC\)](#)

Pay, Skills, Test Drive Ideas, Eligibility

- **Pay**
 - National Position Survey
 - Collateral Benefits
 - Discretion, Accountability, Responsibility, Recognition
- **Skills**
 - Define and promote certification opportunities
 - Switch it up: Cross Training
- **Test Drive Ideas**
 - Listen from the ground up
 - Build engagement with the community
 - Try small and expand or move on
- **Eligibility**
 - eLearning is available whether you are large or small
 - A driver is a driver is a driver

Strategies for Building Strong Transit Culture

Advice from Frontline Transit Managers on finding and keeping drivers:

- Succession planning and fair market pay.
- Annual driver appreciation day, good communication, and responsive management.
- Company sponsored engagements for Drivers: service projects and community events.
- Increase wages, flexible hours, cross training, customer education, and overtime.
- Veterans, recruiting veterans as drivers and support staff.
- If you are part of another agency, government office, give people a chance to try out driving, sometimes they like it.
- Give drivers training opportunities and ability to increase discretion, show respect for results.

Examples of Programs Working Outside the Box

- Big Woods Transit, Nett Lake Band of Chippewa, Minnesota
 - Many drivers stay 10+ years
 - Drivers pick up manifests and decide their route and timing
 - Drivers choose uniforms
 - New Vehicle Drum Ceremony and community gathering, naming the vehicle, pizza party, perfect safety record
- Translating that into your system
 - Let drivers know you are doing your best for them, give them variety and responsibility if they are able
 - Don't make rules you can't enforce, build opportunities for trust and achievement
 - Ribbon cuttings are not enough, parade your new equipment through the community, schools, grocery stores, community events. Give people a chance to see a bus before they ride one

National RTAP Overview: Resources and Channels

2022 Resources

- [Updated National RTAP Technical Brief on Mobile Driver Simulator Training](#)
- [Mentoring the Next Generation of Knowledge Managers-National Transportation Knowledge Network](#)

Upcoming Events



[Risky Business II:
Insurance for
Nonprofits and Small
Transit Agencies](#)

December 14, 2022

2:00-3:00 PM ET



[Learn about TACL:
The Transportation
Technical Assistance
Coordination Library](#)

February 28, 2023

2:00-3:00 PM ET



[Resource Share
Overview Webinar](#)

March 9, 2023

2:00-3:00 PM ET

5th National RTAP Conference Navigating the Tides of Change

Marriott Resort & Spa at Grande Dunes
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

December 3-6, 2023

Save the Date! More information coming soon.

Sign up for eNews
updates



Making Connections 2022: The National Transit Workforce
Conference Resources

December 13-14, 2022

The following resources provide additional information on the topics that will be presented at the [Making Connections 2022: The National Transit Workforce Conference](#) in Washington, DC on December 13-14, 2022. National RTAP offers direct technical assistance and research services. Assistance can be requested by emailing questions to nrtap@nationalrtap.org. Additional resources can be found on our website at <https://nationalrtap.org>.

National RTAP Products and Tools

Resource Library - <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Resource-Center/Resource-Library>

Resource Catalog - <https://dend.nationalrtap.org/Resource-Library/Advanced-Search?date=152>

Transportation Technical Assistance Coordination Library (TACL) - <https://transportation-tacl.org/>

eLearning - <https://elearning.nationalrtap.org/>

Cost Allocation Calculator - <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Technology/Tools/Cost-Allocation-Calculator>

GTFS Builder - <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Technology/Tools/GTFS-Builder>

ProcurementPRO - <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Technology/Tools/ProcurementPRO>

Rural NTD - <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Technology/Tools/Rural-NTD>

Website Builder - <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Technology/Tools/Website-Builder>

Apprenticeships and Mentoring

Marine, C. Mentoring the Next Generation of Knowledge Managers. National Transportation Knowledge Network, 2022. <https://transportationknowledge.com/NTKN/blog/Mentoring-the-Next-Generation-of-Knowledge-Managers>

Contact us

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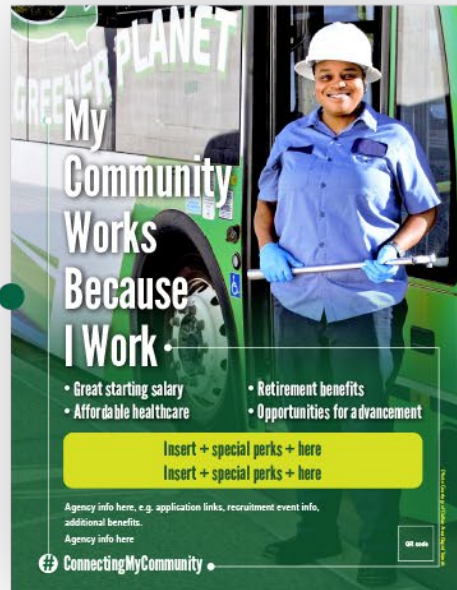


TWC Making Connections 2022



ConnectingMyCommunity

National Transit Frontline Worker Campaign Toolkit •



David Stephen
ITLC/TWC Senior Communications Specialist



What is the National Transit Frontline Worker Campaign Toolkit?

A central repository of:





Working in Partnership to Respond to a Critical Need

Local Agencies and Partners Across the Nation





Themes Created from Consultations with Partners

- # My Community Works Because I Work
- # My Work Gets People Where They Need to Be
- # Take the Wheel of Your Future
- # Ride Into Your Transit Career
- # Drive Into a Greener Future
- # Serving My Community
- # Connect Your Community

your agency info here
your agency info here
your agency info here
your agency info here
your agency info here
your agency info here

Insert
gift code
here

My Work Gets People Where They Need To Be

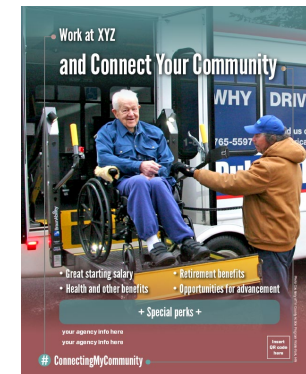
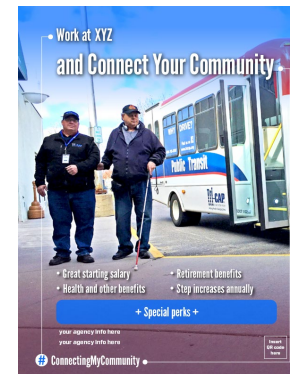
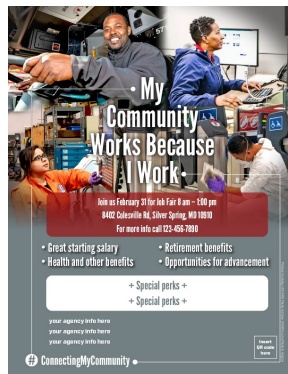
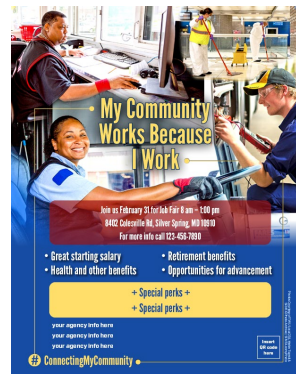
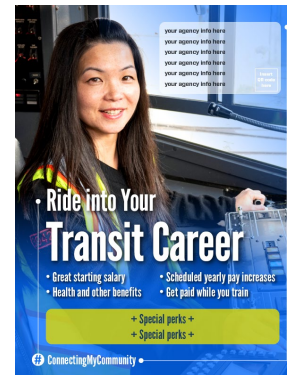
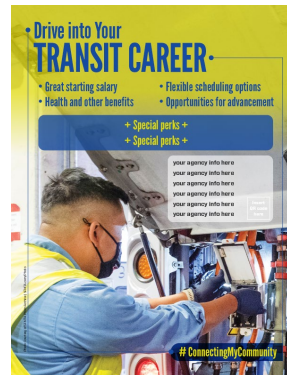
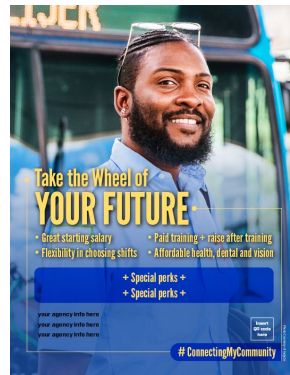
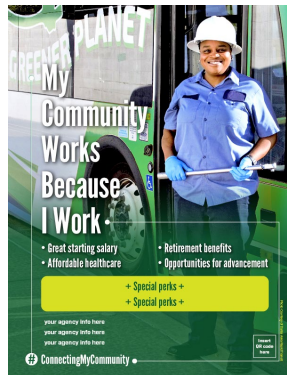
- Great starting salary
- Health and other benefits
- Scheduled yearly pay increases
- Get paid while you train

+ Special perks +
+ Special perks +

ConnectingMyCommunity



Advertising Templates Using Themes





• How to Customize the Ad Template •

1 Open the file in **Adobe Acrobat** app



2 Fill in

+ Agency information (e.g. application links, recruitment event info, additional benefits)

+ Name of your agency

+ Special perks

3 Add your logo/QR code by going to the the menu bar
Edit/Add Image

4 Save as a **PDF**





Other Toolkit Components: Sample Advertisements

Chicago Transit Authority

Bus Operators

Now Hiring!

Competitive salary: \$23.44/Hour
Work up to 32 hours a week

Medical benefits
Paid on-the-job training

Priority processing for CDL/CLP holders
No CDL required to apply

Career building opportunities

Apply today at
transitchicago.com/careers



marta Career Fair

Hiring Bus Operators and Journeyman Bus Technicians

Register for the event



THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2022
3 PM - 7 PM

MARTA HEADQUARTERS
2424 PIEDMONT RD. NE
MASKS REQUIRED FOR ENTRANCE

Now Offering
Signing bonus of \$3,000
ONLY APPLICABLE TO BUS OPERATORS AND TECHNICIANS

Check for upcoming career fairs and open positions
ITSMARTA.COM/CAREERS
(404) 848-5544

MARTA will train all permit holders and Class "C" holders for their CDL

BENEFITS // TRAINING // GROWTH



DRIVERS WANTED

SPACE COAST Area Transit

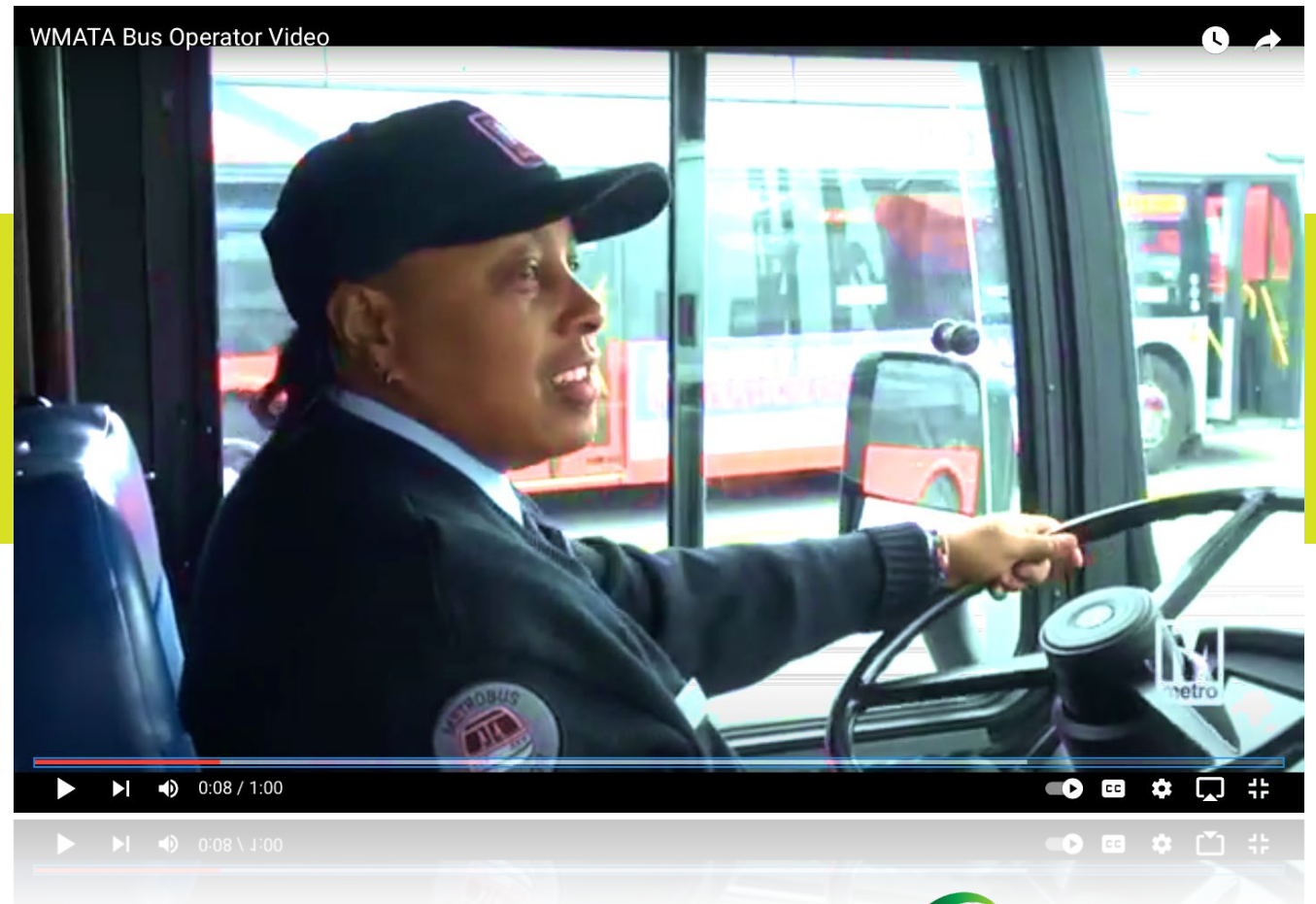
- CDL License Required
- Full & Part Time Jobs + Benefits

Apply Online: 321Transit.com/jobs



Other Toolkit Components: Agency Advertising Videos

Workers tell their story





Other Toolkit Components: Effective Agency Strategies

Webinar recording now available

THE **TWC** • TRANSIT WORKFORCE CENTER PRESENTS



Recruiting and Developing Today's Transit Workforce

.....


This webinar, presented June 7, 2022, discussed strategies for transit to meet the nation-wide challenges for frontline worker recruitment.

Click here to watch 



Other Toolkit Components: Background Research and Reports

RESOURCE TYPE: BRIEFINGS | **TRANSIT MODE:** BUS - FIXED ROUTE



TWC Briefing Report: Bus Driver Recruitment and Retention in Challenging Times

The TWC released this brief in spring 2022 discussing challenges facing transit agencies in recruiting and retaining bus drivers.

Transit Workforce Center
April 2022

TOPICS: [HIRING AND RECRUITMENT](#) , [RETENTION](#) , [SAFETY AND HEALTH](#)

RESOURCE TYPE: PUBLICATIONS | **TRANSIT MODE:** ALL MODES



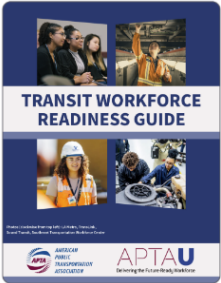
Attracting and Retaining Women in the Transportation Industry

Examines recruitment and retention strategies and emphasizes importance of community-orientation and mentoring.

Mineta Transportation Institute
February 2019

TOPICS: [DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION](#) , [HIRING AND RECRUITMENT](#) , [RETENTION](#)

APTA Transit Workforce Readiness Guide



APTA's Transit Workforce Readiness Guide is a highly interactive and easy-to-use online resource for executives and their staff to assist organizations in building a more diverse talent pipeline by attracting high school students, especially those coming from underserved communities, into entry-level transit positions.



National Transit Frontline Worker Campaign Rollout

Public Announcement and Rollout – September 2022



An evolving tool, to be continually supplemented with:

- # New materials
- # Resources
- # Strategies from the field

Accessible at
transitworkforce.org/ConnectingMyCommunity



Contact Us

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Contact Us for Assistance

Email us **twc@transportcenter.org**

Call us at **1-855-888-NTWC**

Learn more about us at

<http://transitworkforce.org>



Thank You!

