

Summary of Bus Operator Hiring Steps – Common and Best Practices

Hiring Process Step	Agency Common Practices	Bottlenecks and Challenges	People Involved	Strategies to Consider
Job Posting	• Most transit agencies list requirements, preferred qualifications, job descriptions, and pay/benefits. • Most transit agencies do not include detailed information about the hiring timeline. • Some transit agencies focus more on soft skills or framing the job in terms of its benefits to the community.	• A job posting that is not specific or doesn't adequately describe the position may lead to many applicants who are not a good fit.	• Human resources representatives (or, in smaller agencies, whoever takes on human resources roles) • Recruitment managers • Employment and development staff	• Be up front with job requirements to ensure candidates understand them before going through the hiring process. • List pay and benefits clearly. • As much as is possible, communicate information about the hiring timeline so candidates know what to expect. • Emphasize the positive impact on the community. • If struggling to receive enough qualified applicants, consider making the posting and application short to increase the candidate pool. Relevant job details should still be communicated early at a subsequent hiring step.



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Application Review

- Some agencies advance all candidates to the next hiring step after the application while others are more selective at the application phase.
 - Many agencies manually review the full application, while others have automated systems that do not progress candidates without the required qualifications.
 - Some agencies keep applications very short in order to get more candidates while others require more information upfront.
- For agencies with a large volume of applicants on a continuous basis, it may become challenging or time consuming to review all of them.
- Human resources representatives
 - Recruitment managers
 - Employment and development staff
- If there aren't too many applicants, advance most or all candidates, which may ensure that good candidates are not overlooked for missing a preferred qualification.
 - If there are high volumes of applicants, consider being more selective in screening, such as only looking at candidates with customer service experience, which, for places with large applicant pools, may be necessary to save time on future steps.
 - Conduct short screening calls to gauge seriousness in the position before further review.
 - Build automation in the application as appropriate; candidates who do not meet a minimum qualification will automatically receive notice.



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				• Use a ranking system for applicants and initially proceed with only the top-ranking candidates.
Behavioral/ Personality Test	• Most tests consist of scenario-based and personality- and behavior-related questions. Many tests ask about customer service experience and interactions.	• In some cases, tests are done in-person and wait times for scheduling candidates can be weeks or months. • Some transit agency staff are skeptical that questions in the tests currently used by the agency are effective at predicting the best fit candidates.	• Often virtual/online • Human resources representatives • Tests could be developed in-house with assistance from other teams and by assessing qualities of current top-performing bus operators.	• Allow tests to be taken virtually with robust test security and proctoring measures to avoid having the scheduling process become a bottleneck. • Use tests that show evidence for being effective in transit or a related industry. • Track bus operator performance to assess whether tests are effective at predicting the most successful candidates.
Interview	• Bus operator candidate interviews might be in-person or virtual and typically last between 15 to 30 minutes. • It is common for operator interviews to be conducted by HR staff, operations staff, or a	• Interviews can become a bottleneck if staff availability or time is limited. Candidates may have to wait a long time to be scheduled for an interview, during which they could move on to other job opportunities.	• Human resources representatives • Recruitment managers • Bus operations managers or trainers • Employment and development staff	• Allow candidates to self-schedule and/or use automated systems to help reduce inefficiencies in interview scheduling. • Ask questions about prior behaviors in relevant situations to help assess



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	combination; sometimes agencies use a single interviewer while others use a panel. • Some agencies conduct as many interviews as possible in one day each week (e.g., all interviews are scheduled for Tuesdays), particularly if interviews are conducted by staff members who have additional non-hiring responsibilities. In cases where interviewers are full-time hiring/recruitment staff, agencies may schedule interviews with more flexibility.	• Manual scheduling that requires back and forth communication with candidates to find times that work can become a bottleneck.		a candidate's fit for the job. • Conduct in-person interviews or properly prepare a candidate for virtual interviews by communicating expectations about professionalism and timeliness. This will help assess whether they can present themselves professionally. • Conduct interviews on-site at job fairs to combine steps and save time. • Give a contingent offer at the end of successful interviews and fill out all relevant paperwork immediately to avoid additional time waiting. • Interview candidates early to keep them engaged in the process.
Drug and Alcohol Screening & DOT Physical Exam	• Transit agencies typically send candidates to an external vendor for this step.	• It's not uncommon for physical exams to flag candidates for something like sleep apnea, for	• External vendor • Sometimes process is handled by safety and security staff	• Conduct as many steps as possible in one appointment (i.e., one appointment can cover



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	- Some agencies have candidates schedule their own appointments, while others assist in the scheduling. - Some agencies have hiring events where they conduct drug and alcohol testing on-site.	which they must do a follow up sleep test. This may add time to the process or lead to candidates dropping out.		the drug testing, DOT physical exam, and any pre-employment tests). - Give candidates a specific timeframe in which they must complete the drug and alcohol testing and DOT physical exam. - Assist candidates with scheduling appointments. - Arrange for a walk-in partnership at a vendor so candidates can be seen promptly.
Background Check & Employment Verification	- Most agencies conduct background checks through an external vendor. For cases that are flagged by the vendor, some agencies conduct manual reviews. - Agencies are required to conduct employment verification and check of previous drug tests at prior DOT employers; agencies typically make three attempts before proceeding.	- Manual background check reviews of flagged cases can become a bottleneck for agencies with high volumes of applicants. - If an agency requires a reply from previous DOT employers, this can create a bottleneck. - Some agencies skip employment verification (outside of confirming drug test history for DOT	- External vendor - The process is typically handled by the team in charge of full hiring process (i.e. HR, E&D, recruiters, etc.)	- Consider limiting the background check, both in terms of time frame and type of offense, to what is legally required and what the transit agency feels is essential and job-related. - State on applicant paperwork not just what types of offenses can potentially disqualify a candidate versus those that may not.



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		employers) due to lacking staff time/capacity.		
Reference Check	• Many agencies do not require references. • Some agencies indicated that they did not find references to be helpful in gauging candidate fit.	• Checking references can take a lot of staff time which might be better used on other activities that better predict candidate fit, like interviews or assessments.	• The process is typically handled by the team in charge of full hiring process (i.e. HR, E&D, recruiters, etc.)	• Consider removing reference requirements unless it has been helpful in assessing candidate fit.
Training/Onboarding	• Some agencies have training cycles; start times can range from every week to every eight weeks.	• Training can be a bottleneck if candidates are hired just after a training cycle has started and they have to wait for the next one or if training	• HR is sometimes involved in onboarding • Bus operations trainers	• If training is cyclical, time job postings in conjunction with the training start date, so that pre-employment processes should be



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- Some agencies hire on a cycle and begin training in coordination with that cycle.
- Some agencies begin training when they have hired enough people to be in a cohort or, in the case of small agencies, immediately when a candidate is hired.

cohorts are full and candidates must wait for the next available spot.

- finishing up around the time of the start of training and no candidates are waiting for weeks to start.
- If hiring continuously, ensure candidates can begin training immediately.



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