



Recruiting and Retention Toolkit 2026

Table of Contents

<u>General Overview</u>	<u>Pg.2</u>
<u>Candidate Profile</u>	<u>Pg.4</u>
<u>Recruiting</u>	<u>Pg.8</u>
<u>Internal Candidates</u>	<u>Pg.11</u>
<u>External Candidates</u>	<u>Pg.14</u>
<u>Community Partnerships</u>	<u>Pg.24</u>
<u>Hiring Practices</u>	<u>Pg.29</u>
<u>Retention Strategies</u>	<u>Pg.37</u>
<u>Onboarding</u>	<u>Pg.39</u>
<u>New Hire Training Resources</u>	<u>Pg.42</u>
<u>Employee Engagement</u>	<u>Pg.45</u>
<u>Other Resources</u>	<u>Pg.53</u>

General Overview

The modern transit industry in Pennsylvania is facing a dual challenge: an aging workforce and a highly competitive labor market where candidates have numerous options in the private logistics and delivery sectors. To remain competitive, agencies must shift from a reactive "seat-filling" mentality where the goal is simply to have a body behind the wheel to a proactive "career-building" culture.

Research into transit turnover indicates that the "Golden Window" of retention occurs during the first 90 days. If an employee feels unsupported or overwhelmed during this period, the likelihood of resignation is exponentially higher. This toolkit provides ideas to incorporate into your workplace to ensure that every new hire is integrated into the agency's social and professional fabric from day one.

Understanding our positions, using a variety of recruiting tactics, compliant hiring, thorough new hire onboarding and using training and retention strategies will help in identifying the right candidates and keeping the good ones.



Driver Cost of Turnover Calculator

Why is it important to consider Recruiting and Retention? Because it costs money - money in direct costs of recruiting and retention programs. Cost to the organization also includes the cost of turnover. Finding ways to reduce turnover will only help the organization.

To manage what you can't measure, transit agencies must quantify the "Vacancy Cost" of losing a single driver. Turnover is rarely just the cost of a new job posting; it is a compounding expense that includes training hours, overtime for remaining staff, and lost operational efficiency.

Below is a structured calculator designed to help transit agencies determine the true fiscal impact of a driver leaving the organization.

Transit Driver Turnover Cost Calculator

Category	Expense Description	Estimated Cost (Per Hire)
Separation Costs	Exit interviews, administrative processing, and payout of accrued PTO/benefits.	\$500 – \$1,500
Recruitment Costs	Social media ad spend, job board fees, and HR staff time for screening/interviewing.	\$1,500 – \$3,000
Onboarding & CDL	Paid classroom time, Certified Technical Trainer wages, and licensing/testing fees.	\$5,000 – \$8,000
Training Wages	Wages paid to the trainee during the 3-6 week period before they are revenue-ready.	\$3,500 – \$5,500
Vacancy Coverage	Overtime (OT) pay for existing drivers to cover the open route at 1.5x or 2x rates.	\$2,000 – \$5,000
Operational Impact	Cost of missed trips, reduced reliability, and potential loss of grant funding/contract bonuses.	Varies
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST	The true cost of losing one driver.	\$12,500 – \$23,000+



Candidate Profile: Drivers

Understanding Driver Roles: Fixed Route vs Shared Ride

While the core mission of any transit agency is safe mobility, the daily reality of a Fixed Route operator differs significantly from that of a Shared Ride driver. To recruit effectively, agencies must recognize that these roles appeal to different psychological profiles and lifestyle needs. Identifying these distinct driver personas allows recruiters to tailor their messaging focusing on technical precision and routine for one, and empathy and adaptability for the other. By aligning the right personality with the right service type, agencies don't just fill a seat; they build a foundation for long-term retention by ensuring the employee's natural strengths match the demands of their assigned environment.

The Fixed Route Persona

- Typically thrives on structure, predictability, and technical mastery.
- Often view themselves as pilots of the road, taking pride in maintaining a rigorous schedule and navigating large, complex vehicles through traffic situations.
- Often motivated by clear career progression and higher pay scales.

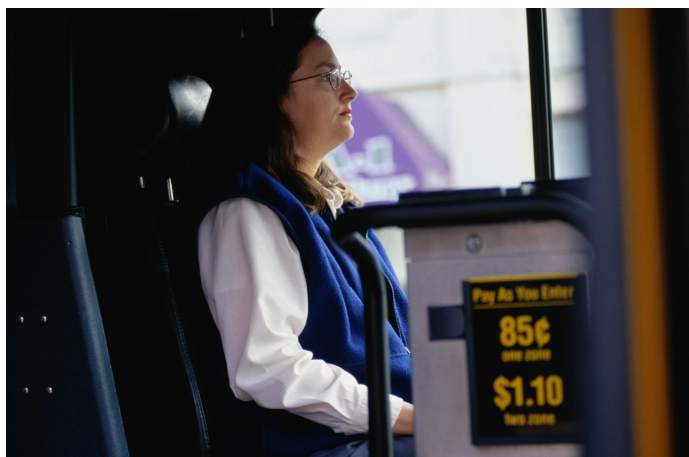
The Shared Ride Persona

- Drivers often prefer a more varied pace and find deep satisfaction in the door-through-door service they provide to seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- The job is less about hitting a specific timepoint and more about the quality of the interaction and the vital social link they provide to their passengers.

Recognizing these differences is key to the "Grow Your Own" strategy, as it helps determine which Shared Ride drivers have the technical ambition for Fixed Route and which are perfectly suited to remain as experts in specialized paratransit service.

It's important to distinguish between **Shared Ride** and **Fixed Route** drivers. While both require safe driving skills, their daily environments, regulatory burdens, and ideal "soft skills" differ significantly.

Broadening these candidate profiles is critical in a tight labor market to ensure the right fit for each service type.



Understanding Driver Roles: Fixed Route vs Shared Ride

1. The Shared Ride (Paratransit) Operator

- **The Mission:** Providing door-to-door or curbside "human service" transportation, primarily for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- **Ideal Candidate Profile: "The Caregiver":** Individuals with a background in healthcare, social work, or elder care. **The Second-Career Worker:** Retirees seeking part-time, community-focused work.
- **Key Soft Skills:** High empathy, extreme patience, and strong interpersonal communication for navigating delicate passenger needs.
- **Technical/Physical Demands:** Mastery of mobility device securement (wheelchair tie-downs) and navigating non-traditional "micro-routes" in residential or rural areas.
- **Compliance:** Often requires a standard Class C license, though larger vehicles require a Class B with Passenger (P) endorsement.

2. The Fixed Route (Transit) Operator

- **The Mission:** Operating high-capacity vehicles on a rigid pre determined schedule within urban or inter-city corridors.
- **Ideal Candidate Profile: The Career Builder:** Candidates looking for a long-term union career with a stable pension and high-tier benefits. Willing to start on an Extra Board.
- **Key Soft Skills:** Resilience in high-stress traffic, ability to manage large volumes of diverse passengers, and strict time-management discipline.
- **Technical/Physical Demands:** Operating 35–60ft transit buses and managing complex farebox/GPS technology.
- **Compliance:** Mandatory **Class B CDL with Passenger (P) endorsement** and no Air Brake restriction.

Feature	Shared Ride (Paratransit)	Fixed Route (City/Regional)
Primary Recruitment Hook	Serve Your Neighbors	Career & Stability
Target Demographics	Retirees, AARP members, Caregivers	Veterans, Career-switchers
Schedule Type	Often more flexible; "Puzzle-piece" shifts	Typically starts on Extra Board picking up shifts. Once full time - Traditional bids; seniority-based scheduling
Training Pathway	"No CDL Required" / Lower barrier to entry	Paid CDL Training / Apprenticeship
Engagement Focus	Personal recognition and "thank-yous"	Safety awards and performance bonuses

Understanding Driver Technical Skills: Fixed Route vs Shared Ride

Understanding the mentality of a candidate is an important part of the recruiting process, but technical skills to do the job are equally as important.

Technical Skill Needs

1. The Shared Ride (Paratransit) Operator

The technical profile for this persona is centered on **human-interfaced technology** and specialized safety equipment.

- **Mobility Device Securement:** Mastery of 4-point tie-down systems, lap/shoulder belt interlocks, and the technical operation of hydraulic lifts or electric ramps.
- **Micro-Navigation & Tablet Proficiency:** Skill in using demand/response dispatch software (e.g., Trapeze or Reveal) to manage "manifest" changes in real-time.
- **Bi-Directional Communication:** Proper use of two-way radio codes and "push-to-talk" systems to relay gate codes or medical delays to dispatch.
- **Specialized Pre-Trip Inspections:** Beyond basic mechanics, these drivers must technically inspect climate control systems (essential for senior passengers) and emergency medical kits.

2. The Fixed Route (Transit) Operator

The technical profile for this persona is centered on **heavy machinery** and high-volume data systems.

- **Advanced Vehicle Maneuvering:** Technical mastery of "tail swing," "pivot points," and "off-tracking" for 35ft, 40ft, or 60ft articulated buses in tight urban environments.
- **Air Brake Systems:** In-depth knowledge of air pressure gauges, compressors, and emergency brake activation a core requirement for the Pennsylvania CDL Class B.
- **Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS):** Operating Automatic Passenger Counters (APC), Headway Management systems, and destination sign programming (Luminator/Hanover).
- **Farebox & Validator Tech:** Troubleshooting electronic fare collection systems and contactless "tap" validators to ensure revenue accuracy.

While the technical skill sets such as vehicle size and route navigation differ between Shared Ride and Fixed Route operations, Shared Ride drivers often possess the foundational "soft skills" and operational resilience that are the hardest to interview for and to teach in a classroom. Transitioning these drivers into Fixed Route is a strategic "Grow Your Own" move that leverages their existing institutional knowledge and proven commitment to the agency's mission.

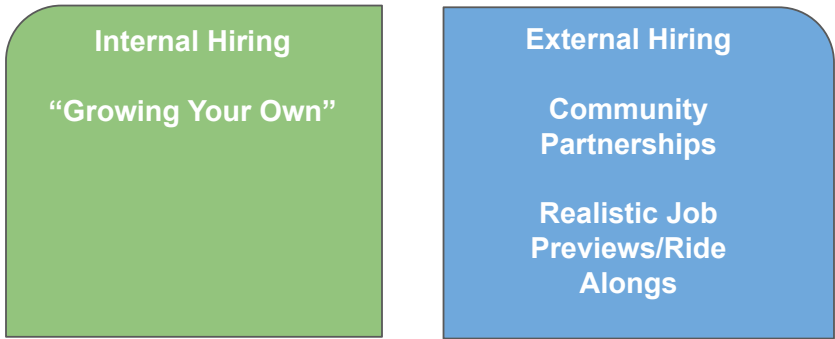


Recruiting

Recruiting

Recruiting in the modern transit landscape requires a departure from traditional "post and hope" advertising. To build a resilient workforce, Pennsylvania transit agencies must cultivate a dual-pipeline strategy that balances the immediate infusion of external talent with the long-term stability of internal development. This approach acknowledges that while external candidates bring fresh perspectives and diverse backgrounds, internal candidates particularly those moving from Shared Ride to Fixed Route offer a "pre-vetted" reliability, as they are already integrated into the agency's safety culture and service geography. By institutionalizing both paths, agencies create a recruiting environment where every vacancy is seen as an opportunity for either a new community member to start a career or an existing employee to advance one.

This section outlines ideas and tactics for this dual-pipeline.



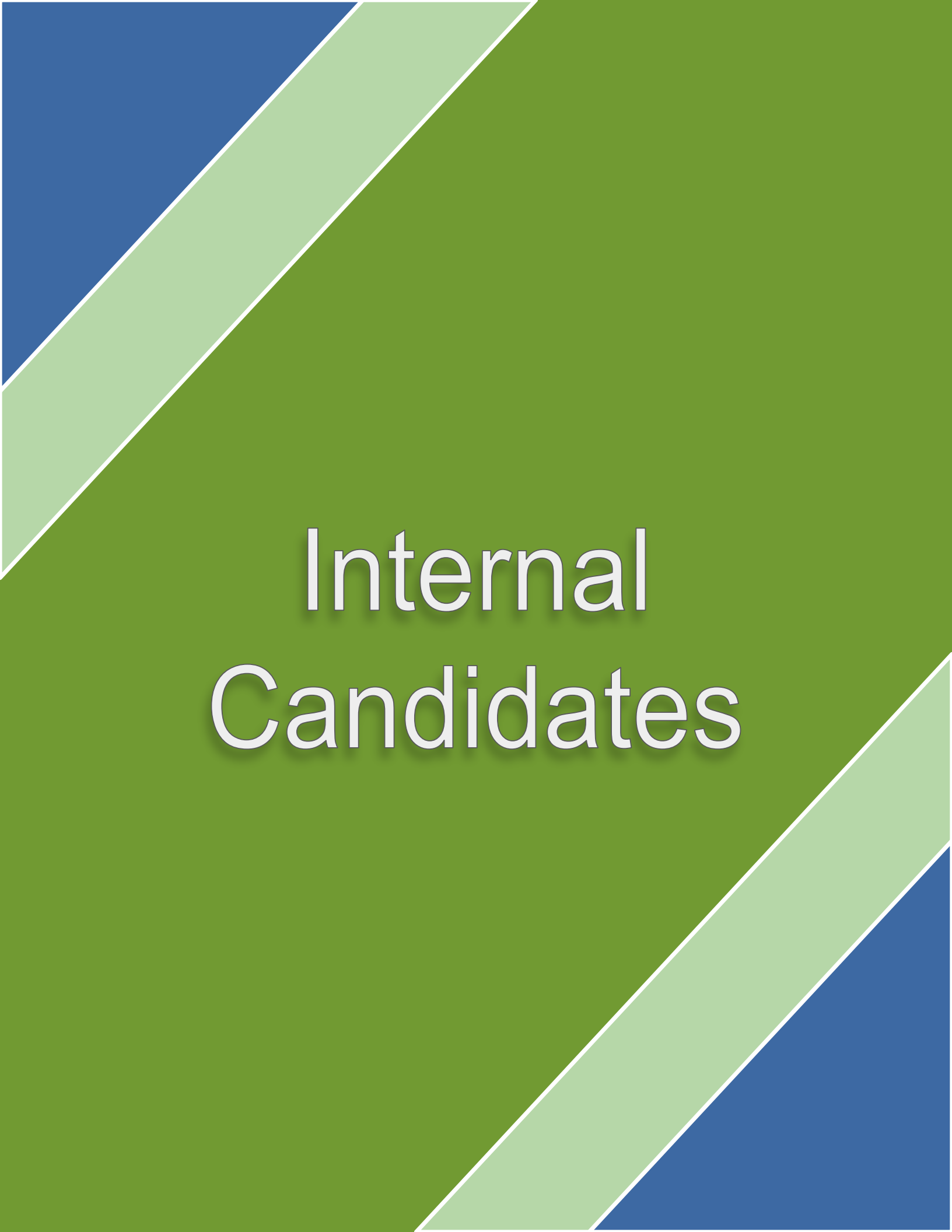
Together, these strategies ensure that the candidates entering the organization are not only qualified on paper but are also culturally aligned and fully aware of the unique rewards and challenges of public transit.

Ready to Recruit? Candidate Motivation Profile

Recruiting for driver positions in public transportation requires a nuanced understanding of who the "ideal driver" is in today's economy. Successful agencies no longer look for a single archetype; instead, they recruit across three distinct **Driver Motivation Profiles**.

1. First, there is the **Career Builder**, often a younger worker or an internal Shared Ride employee looking to "Step Up" into a Class B role for higher pay and long-term stability.
2. Second is the **Service-Oriented Veteran**, individuals from military or emergency service backgrounds who value discipline, safety, and community impact.
3. Finally, there is the **Lifestyle Flexibility Seeker**, often retirees or parents who are drawn to the predictable bus schedules of Fixed Route or the community-focused pace of Shared Ride. By tailoring job postings to speak directly to these personas highlighting "Total Rewards" like pensions for the Career Builder and "Community Impact" for the Veteran-agencies can break through the noise of generic logistics and delivery advertisements.





Internal Candidates

A "Grow Your Own" strategy is one of the most effective ways to solve long-term driver shortages while rewarding loyalty. By creating internal pipelines specifically moving **Shared Ride** drivers or non-driving staff into **Fixed Route** roles agencies can reduce "new-hire shock" and leverage employees who already understand the agency's culture.

1. The "Pipeline" Philosophy

Successful agencies treat their Shared Ride (Paratransit) division as a "prep school" for Fixed Route operations.

- **Clear Career Pathing:** Explicitly map out the transition from a non-CDL role to a CDL-required role during the initial interview for Shared Ride positions.
- **Seniority Preservation:** Work with union leadership to ensure that drivers transitioning between divisions can maintain certain longevity benefits (such as vacation accrual rates), even if their "driving seniority" for route bidding starts over per the CBA.

2. Internal Recruitment Tactics

- **"Step Up" Informational Sessions:** Host quarterly "Lunch and Learns" where Fixed Route drivers and union stewards talk to Shared Ride drivers about the pay increase, different equipment, and the CDL training process.
- **Internal Job Postings:** Ensure all driving vacancies are posted internally for at least 7-10 days before they are listed on Indeed or other external boards.
- **Departmental Cross-Training:** Allow non-driving staff (cleaners, fuelers, or customer service reps) to shadow the CDL training for a day to demystify the process.

3. The Internal CDL "Bridge" Program

To effectively "Grow Your Own," the agency must remove the financial and educational barriers to the CDL.

- **Paid Training Leave:** Provide a structured 4-6 week period where the employee's primary job is attending the agency's CDL school while receiving their current hourly rate.
- **Guaranteed Interviews:** Any internal candidate who successfully completes the pre-employment "permit" phase should be guaranteed an interview and a practical skills assessment.

4. Incentive Structure Ideas for Internal Moves

Agencies should incentivize current employees to advance their skills rather than looking for a new job elsewhere.

- **CDL Completion Bonus:** Offer a one-time "Step-Up" bonus (e.g., \$500 - \$1,000) once the employee passes their CDL skills test and begins solo Fixed Route driving.
- **Retention Milestones:** Tie the bonus to longevity, such as paying half at the 6-month mark and the remainder at the 1-year mark in the new role.

Sample Internal Candidate Interest Form (Template)

Goal: To capture interest early and build a database of "future" Fixed Route drivers.

Employee Name: _____

Current Role: _____ **Seniority Date:** _____

Current License: ☐ Class C ☐ Class B

I am interested in:

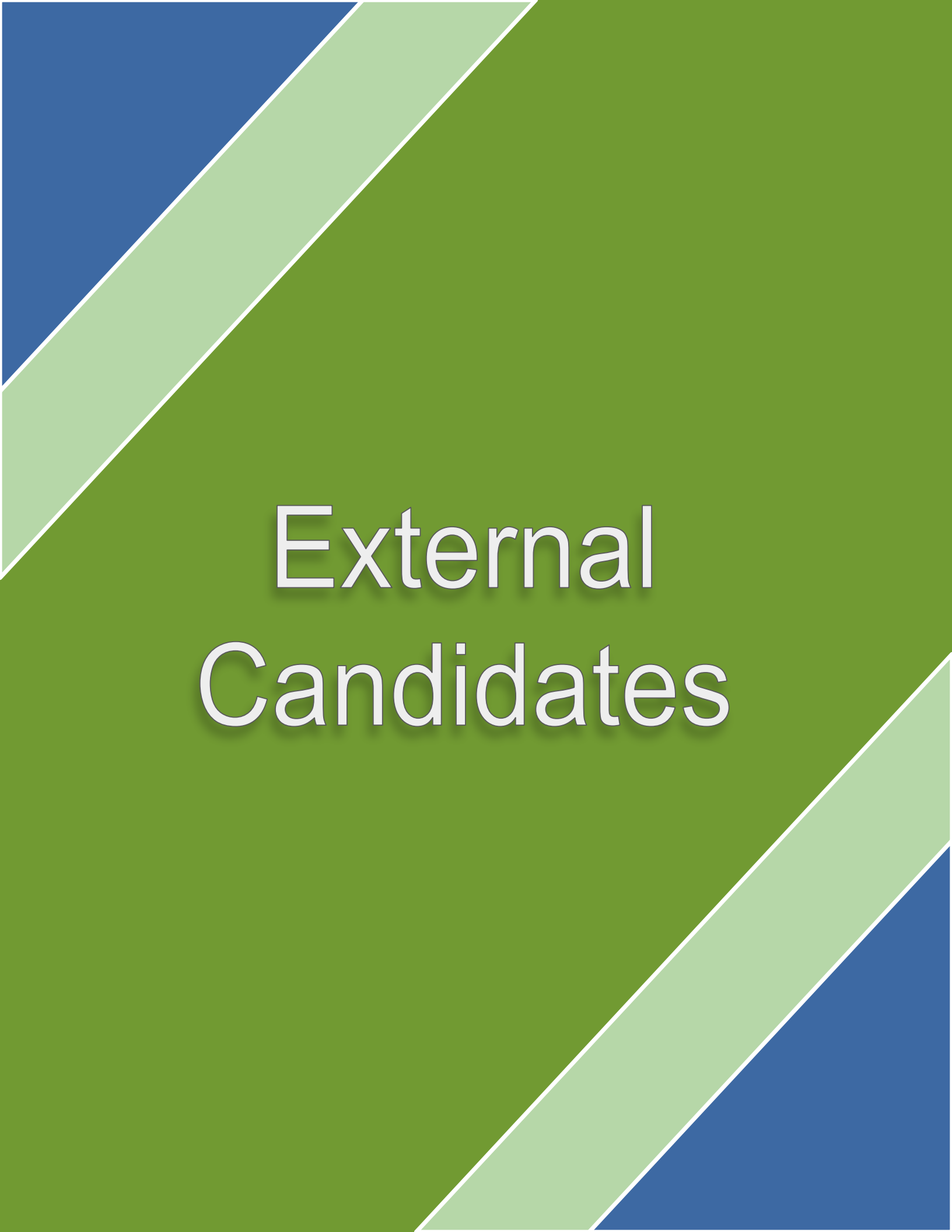
- ☐ Obtaining my CDL Class B Permit.
- ☐ Transitioning from Shared Ride to Fixed Route.
- ☐ Becoming a Certified Trainer

What is your primary motivation for seeking a transition?

- ☐ Higher Pay Rate
- ☐ Different Schedule
- ☐ Career Advancement
- ☐ Other: _____

Strategic Benefit

Focusing on internal candidates creates a **"Team" Environment**. When employees see their peers getting promoted and supported through training, it drives overall engagement and reduces the "Turnover Tax" associated with outside recruiting.



External Candidates

Application Process, Job Postings and Ads

Now that you know what the candidate profile is, the gateway to these individuals is a frictionless **Job Application and Posting Strategy**. In a competitive market, the job application must be

1. mobile-friendly and
2. capable of being completed in under ten minutes;

"Administrative friction" at this stage leads to immediate candidate drop-off. Administrative friction means difficulty completing the application process. This could include HRIS required registration requirements, long and time consuming applications to complete, difficulty in finding how to apply, and in person only applications.

Once the application process is streamlined, agencies should deploy it across a diversified network of **Job Posting Resources**.



By combining a clear understanding of who they are looking for with an easy-to-access application and a hyper-local posting strategy, agencies can build a robust pipeline that outpaces private-sector competitors.

[Click here for more sample job posts](#)

CamTran OFFERS EMPLOYEES A BUSLOAD OF BENEFITS

- INSURANCE PLANS
- PAID TIME OFF
- PAID CDL TRAINING
- PAID SICK LEAVE
- FREE BUS PASS FOR YOU & YOUR FAMILY
- RETIREMENT BENEFITS
- OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER GROWTH
- WELLNESS INITIATIVES

-APPLY ONLINE AT WWW.CAMTRANBUS.COM-
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER. FEMALES & MINORITIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY.

BCT
BUCKS COUNTY TRANSPORT

**ARE YOU BORED?
WE'RE HIRING
DRIVERS!**

Looking for a Meaningful Job?
Bored and wanting to get out of the house?

- ▶ FLEXIBLE DAYS AND TIMES!
- ▶ NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY
- ▶ \$500 SIGN ON BONUS!

CONTACT HR :267-843-6318

Employee Referrals

Employee referral programs stand as the gold standard for external recruitment in the transit industry, primarily because they leverage the "social fabric" of your existing workforce to find high-quality, pre-vetted candidates. When a current Professional Operator refers a friend or family member, they are doing more than just filling a vacancy; they are acting as a primary filter for "job-fit." Because the referring employee understands the daily realities of the role - the split shifts, the Pennsylvania weather, and the mental load of the driver's seat—they are unlikely to recommend someone who lacks the necessary resilience or temperament. This results in a pipeline of applicants who enter the **Realistic Job Preview** phase with a higher baseline of commitment than those sourced from generic job boards.

Furthermore, referral programs significantly enhance long-term retention through a "buddy system" effect. Statistics consistently show that referred hires stay longer because they have an immediate, trusted support network within the agency to help them navigate the first 90 days. For the referring employee, the program serves as a form of "peer-validation," reinforcing their own commitment to the agency. To maximize the impact of this strategy, agencies should move away from single, lump-sum payments and toward **milestone-based referral bonuses**. For example, paying a portion of the bonus upon the new hire's successful completion of CDL training.

Finally, employee referrals are the most cost-effective hiring practice, drastically reducing "Vacancy Costs" and marketing spend. While a social media ad or a job fair requires significant upfront investment with no guaranteed return, a referral bonus is a "success-based" cost, i.e. the agency only pays when a candidate is successfully integrated. By celebrating these referrals publicly in the recognition of successful hires, agencies foster a culture where every operator feels like a stakeholder in building a safe, reliable, and professional team.

Basically, good employees know good employees.

Sample Referral programs:

Sample 1:

Submit the Form to HR and Earn Rewards – If your referred candidate is hired and remains employed:

You will receive \$100 per full month they work, for up to two years (less applicable taxes) unless otherwise stated below.

- If a former employee is successfully rehired based on a referral, the referring employee will receive a one-time \$100 appreciation bonus (less applicable taxes).
- If your referral refers someone, you will receive \$50 per full month that their referral remains employed, also for up to two years (less applicable taxes).

Sample 2:

Employee Referral Bonus – \$1,000

The payout is split: \$500 at 6 months and \$500 at the 1-year anniversary, with no limit to referrals per employee. This change significantly increased staff engagement and is promoted through company-wide emails, posters at all terminals, and our quarterly newsletter.

Sample Employee Referral Form from rabbittransit

Referring Employee's Name: _____ Date: _____

Candidate's Name: _____

Relationship to Employee: _____

Have you asked them to complete a job application? ____Yes ____No

Phone: _____

I have read and understand the rabbittransit Referral Program Rules.

Referring Employee's Signature Date

Referring Employee please submit this form to Human Resources.

INTERNAL USE ONLY:

TO BE COMPLETED BY HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT & SUBMITTED TO PAYROLL:

Date Referral Form was received by HR: _____

Date of Referred Employee's Application: _____

Referred candidate's hire date: _____

HR Authorization: _____

Job Posting Best Practices

To maximize visibility on platforms like Indeed and appeal to a broader range of candidates, transit agencies must bridge the gap between internal "transit-speak" and the language job seekers actually use.

According to recruitment data from Indeed and the American Bus Association, 36% of job seekers search for exact, simple job titles. If your posting is titled "Surface Transit Operator II," you are likely missing a massive pool of qualified "Bus Driver" or "Professional Driver" searches.

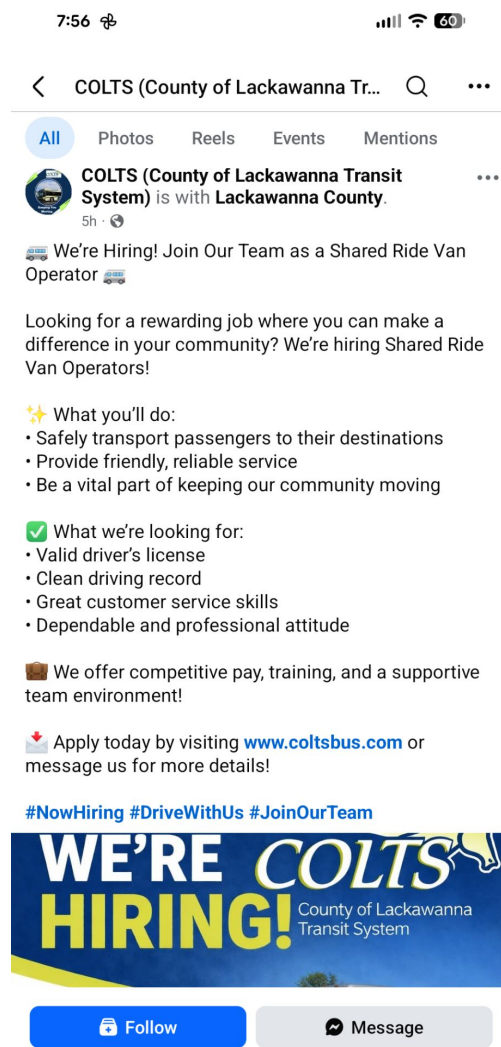
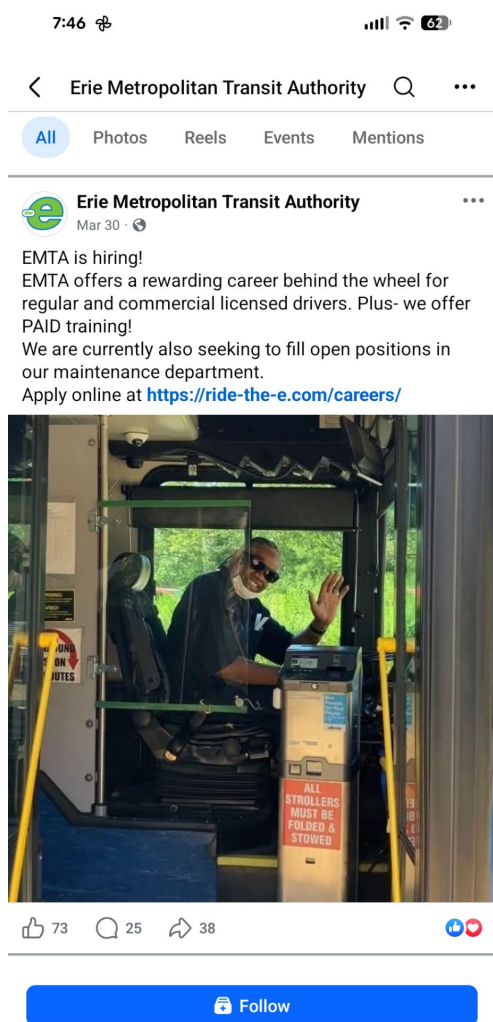
Industry-Specific Term	Candidate-Friendly Translation	Why the Change?
Transit Operator	Bus Driver / Bus Operator	"Operator" is vague; "Bus Driver" is the #1 search term on Indeed.
Revenue Service	Driving with Passengers	Non-industry candidates don't know what "revenue service" means.
Deadhead	Driving without Passengers	Explaining this as "commute time" or "positioning" is clearer.
Manifest	Daily Schedule / Route List	"Manifest" sounds like shipping or aviation jargon.
Alighting	Exiting the Bus	"Alighting" is archaic; "exiting" or "getting off" is universal.
Pull-out / Pull-in	Start of Shift / End of Shift	Focus on the clock, not the garage movement.
Bid / Roster	Schedule Selection	Explain that schedules are chosen based on how long you've been with us.

Job Postings and Social Media

Modern driver recruitment has evolved into a digital-first marketing operation, where social media serves as the primary tool for reaching both active job seekers and "passive" candidates those who aren't looking but are open to the right opportunity.

For Pennsylvania transit agencies, an effective social media strategy moves beyond simple job postings to focus on **brand storytelling**. By sharing "Day in the Life" videos, employee testimonials, and behind-the-scenes content that highlights the agency's mission and culture, you can showcase the rewarding nature of the work. This authenticity is particularly effective for attracting Gen Z and Millennial drivers, who prioritize purpose and workplace community over salary alone.

Strategic recruitment also leverages **AI-driven targeting and programmatic advertising** to ensure your message reaches the right demographic at the right time. Instead of broad, generic ads, agencies can use platforms like **Facebook** and **Instagram** to target individuals based on specific criteria such as location, previous experience in service-oriented roles, or interest in community-based work. This programmatic advertising uses paid ad boosting to target profiled candidates.



Sample Job Posting Optimization Checklist

1. Title & Headline (The Hook)

- **Is the title "Search Friendly"?** (e.g., *Bus Driver* or *School Bus Driver* instead of *Surface Operator II*).
- **Does it include the primary "Hook"?** (e.g., *Paid CDL Training Provided* or *No CDL Required*).
- **Is it free of internal codes/jargon?** (Remove "Grade 4," "Full-time-Temp," or "Dept 50").

2. The "Mobile" First Glance (Top 3 Lines)

- **Is the starting wage visible?** (Candidates on Indeed are 75% more likely to click with a clear \$X/hr).
- **Is the training benefit mentioned immediately?** ("We pay you to get your license").
- **Is the mission stated?** ("Help [County Name] seniors stay connected").

3. Language & Jargon Check (The De-Fuzzing)

- **Did you replace "Revenue Service"** with "Driving with Passengers"?
- **Did you replace "Alighting/Boarding"** with "Exiting/Entering the Bus"?
- **Did you replace "Bid/Roster"** with "Schedule Selection"?
- **Did you replace "Deadhead"** with "Driving to/from the garage"?

4. Requirements & Compliance

- **Are "Must-Haves" clearly separated from "Nice-to-Haves"?**
- **Is the age requirement clear?** (e.g., "Must be at least 21 years old").
- **Is the DOT/Drug Screen mentioned?** ("Must be able to pass a DOT physical and pre-employment drug screen").
- **Is the address specific?** (Does it list the physical depot address so Indeed can calculate the candidate's commute?).

5. Retention & Culture Markers

- **Are milestone bonuses mentioned?** (e.g., "\$500 bonus after 90 days").
- **Are traditional perks listed?** (Birthday recognition, Employee of the Month, uniform allowance).
- **Is the union status mentioned?** (Highlighting stability, pension, and contract-protected raises).

6. The "Call to Action" (CTA)

- **Is the application link direct?** (Avoid sending users through 5+ clicks to reach the form).
- **Is "Indeed Apply" enabled?** (Allows 1-click application from a mobile phone).
- **Is there a phone number for questions?** (For non-digital savvy candidates like retirees).

Strategic Scoring

Score 0-3: Your post likely has high "Drop-off." Candidates are seeing it but not clicking.

Score 4-5: Good, but you may be losing candidates during the long application process.

Score 6: Excellent. Your post is optimized for the 2026 Pennsylvania labor market.

Job Posting Best Practices

1. The "Plain Language" Translation Guide

Transit agencies often use technical terms that are essential for operations but confusing for applicants. Use the table below to "de-jargon" your postings.

2. Title Optimization for SEO

Indeed's algorithm prioritizes short, clear titles. Avoid using internal codes or creative "fluff."

- **Don't Use:** *"Rockstar Driver Needed (Surface Transit Div. 4)"*
- **Do Use:** *"Bus Driver - Paid CDL Training Provided"* or *"Paratransit Driver (No CDL Required)"*
- **Pro-Tip:** If you have multiple roles, post them separately with different titles like "Coach Bus Driver" and "Transit Bus Operator" to capture different search intents.

3. The "Mobile-First" Description Structure

Most candidates apply from their phones while on a break or commuting. Wall-of-text job descriptions will be ignored.

- **The "Elevator Pitch" (Top 3 lines):** Start with the pay, the paid training, and the community impact.
- **Bulleted "Must-Haves" vs. "Nice-to-Haves":** Keep your "Must-Haves" short (e.g., 21+ years old, clean driving record). Long lists of requirements discourage qualified candidates.
- **Salary Transparency:** Posts with a visible salary range receive **75% more clicks** than those without. Even if the wage is set by a CBA, list the starting hourly rate prominently.

Additional Helpful Tips for Success

1. Use "Screener Questions"

Instead of manually reviewing every resume for a CDL, use Indeed's screener questions.

- **Question:** "Do you have a valid Driver's License?"
- **Question:** "Are you willing to undergo a DOT physical and drug screen?"
- **Result:** This filters out unqualified leads immediately, saving HR hours of time.

2. Highlight the "Not-So-Glorious" Parts Honestly

Retention starts with honesty. If the role requires weekends, holidays, or "split shifts," say so clearly.

- **Sample Copy:** *"Our community relies on us 365 days a year. This means our new team members typically work weekends and holidays. We offer a rotating schedule to ensure everyone gets time off to recharge."*

3. Precise Location Data

Job seekers rule out positions based on commute time.

- **Tip:** Instead of just listing "Harrisburg, PA," list the specific street address of the depot or headquarters. This allows Indeed to show the candidate exactly how many minutes their commute will be.

4. "Indeed Apply" Integration

Ensure your Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is synced with **Indeed Apply**. Candidates are 45% more likely to start an application if they can do it with one click using their Indeed profile rather than being redirected to a complex third-party portal.

****Don't forget to include your EEO employer statement on your job postings.**

Job Posting Samples: [click here](#)

Recruiting tool: Realistic Job Preview aka Ride Alongs

To reduce early turnover, agencies should offer different **Realistic Job Previews (RJP)**. These are otherwise known as **Prospective Driver Ride Alongs**. This helps prevent early quits due to candidates not understanding what the job entails or what they visualized. By integrating Ride-Alongs into your recruitment toolkit, you shift the agency's focus from finding anyone who can drive" to "hiring the right person who will stay."

- **Shared Ride Applicants:** Should shadow a driver specifically during a "multi-load" window to see how they manage passenger securement and schedule changes.
- **Fixed Route Applicants:** Should experience a "peak-hour" run to understand the mental stamina required for traffic and high passenger volume.

Benefits of offering Ride Alongs as part of your recruitment process:

1. Filtering for Job-Fit vs. Skill-Fit

A candidate might have a perfect driving record (skill-fit), but they may not be prepared for the social and environmental demands of transit (job-fit). A ride-along allows a candidate to experience:

- **Split-Second Decision Making:** Seeing how a driver manages a detour or a mechanical issue in real-time.
- **Environmental Stressors:** Experiencing the reality of Pennsylvania traffic, weather conditions, and tight schedule adherence.
- **The Invisible Work:** Observing the mental load of monitoring fareboxes, radio communications, and passenger safety simultaneously.

2. Managing Expectations to Prevent New-Hire Overwhelm

The primary goal of a ride along is to remove the "surprises" that lead to resignation. By being transparent about the difficult aspects of the role, you build trust and ensure that those who accept the offer are fully committed.

- **The Schedule Reality:** It allows candidates to see the reality of early pull-outs, late shifts, or "split-shifts" that are common in union bidding environments.
- **Physical Demands:** It highlights the physical requirements, such as long periods of sitting and the repetitive nature of pre-trip inspections.
- **Passenger Interaction:** It provides a front-row seat to de-escalation and customer service, showing that the job is about people as much as it is about driving.

3. Strengthening the Social Fabric Early

When a candidate participates in a ride-along, they are introduced to the agency's culture before they are even hired.

- **Peer Validation:** It gives the candidate a chance to talk to a current "Professional Operator" in an informal setting. This peer-to-peer connection is often more persuasive than a recruiter's pitch.
- **Reducing Anxiety:** Seeing a seasoned pro navigate the "unwritten rules" of the depot and the route makes the daunting task of driving a large vehicle feel more achievable.

4. Improving Long-Term Retention and ROI

While ride-alongs require an upfront investment of time, they significantly reduce the "Vacancy Costs" associated with failed training.

- **Saves Training Dollars:** It is far better for a candidate to realize the job isn't for them during a 2-hour ride-along than in the middle of a multi-week, paid CDL training program.
- **Data for Stay Interviews:** The ride along serves as a baseline. During later "Stay Interviews," supervisors can ask, "Is the job what you expected based on the ride-along?" to identify if operational realities have shifted.

Sample Prospective Driver Ride-Along Waiver

Applicant waivers can be executed to reduce liability.

Release, Waiver of Liability, and Confidentiality Agreement

Agency Name: _____

Date of Observation: _____ Route/Run #: _____

Observing Candidate Name: _____

1. Purpose of the Program

The Ride-Along Program is designed to provide prospective candidates with a realistic preview of the job responsibilities, passenger interactions, and physical demands associated with [Fixed Route / Shared Ride] operations.

2. Safety and Conduct Rules

By signing this document, the Candidate agrees to the following:

- **Observer Status Only:** The Candidate shall remain an observer and is strictly prohibited from operating the vehicle, handling fareboxes, or assisting with passenger securement (e.g., wheelchair tie-downs).
- **Safety Commands:** The Candidate must follow all instructions given by the Operator or Supervisor immediately and without question.
- **Positioning:** The Candidate must remain in the designated observer seat while the vehicle is in motion.
- **Interference:** The Candidate shall not distract the Operator while the vehicle is in motion. Any questions should be held for when the vehicle is at a full stop at a terminus or layover point.

3. Release and Waiver of Liability

I, the undersigned, understand that riding in a public transit vehicle involves inherent risks, including but not limited to vehicle accidents, sudden stops, and exposure to public environments.

- **Assumption of Risk:** I voluntarily assume all risks associated with my participation in the Ride-Along Program.
- **Waiver:** I hereby release, waive, and discharge [Agency Name], its officers, employees, and the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association (PPTA) from any and all liability, claims, or demands for personal injury, death, or property damage arising out of or in any way connected with my participation.

4. Confidentiality and HIPAA Compliance

Especially in **Shared Ride/Paratransit** operations, you may observe passengers with disabilities or medical conditions.

- I agree to maintain the absolute confidentiality of any passenger information I may observe, including names, medical equipment used, or destinations.
- I will not take photographs or videos during the ride-along to protect passenger privacy.

5. Certification

I certify that I am at least 21 years of age, possess a valid driver's license, and am not currently under the influence of any substance that would impair my ability to observe safely.

Candidate Signature: _____ Date: _____

Agency Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____

***Note: have your attorney review and approve before using**



Community Partnerships

Community Partnerships

In an increasingly fragmented labor market, Pennsylvania transit agencies can no longer rely solely on job postings to source high-quality candidates. To build a resilient and sustainable workforce, agencies must transition toward relationship-based recruiting by establishing **Strategic Community Partnerships**. This approach moves beyond the generic career fair to create targeted pipelines with organizations that serve non-traditional labor pools. By aligning with partners who already vet and train potential workers, agencies can reach individuals who possess the specific traits required for transit success—such as reliability, a safety-first mindset, and a commitment to public service—before they are ever picked up by private-sector competitors.

The strength of these partnerships lies in their ability to solve specific workforce gaps. For example, a formal collaboration with **PA CareerLink®** provides more than just a list of applicants; it opens the door to state-funded on-the-job training subsidies and apprenticeship resources that can offset the initial costs of driver development. Similarly, partnering with **Veterans' Organizations** like the VFW or the American Legion allows agencies to tap into a demographic that naturally aligns with the disciplined, highly regulated environment of Fixed Route operations. For Shared Ride service, engaging with **AARP and local Senior Centers** connects agencies with retirees who often seek the community-oriented, flexible roles that paratransit offers. **Local CDL driver training schools** could also be a good resource to identify potential employees and establish a pipeline of CDL candidates ready for employment.

These are just a few of the partnership opportunities that exist.

Ultimately, these partnerships are not just about finding "any" candidate, but about finding the "right" candidate for the long term. Successful implementation requires **Leadership Visibility**, where Managers and HR Directors personally engage with community leaders to position the agency not just as an employer, but as a vital community partner. By institutionalizing these relationships, agencies can create a "warm" pipeline of candidates who enter the application process with a pre-existing understanding of the agency's mission, significantly increasing the likelihood of long-term retention.



Partnership Engagement Recommendations

This **Community Partnership Guide** is designed to help Pennsylvania transit agencies move beyond general job fairs and build high-yield, relationship-based pipelines. By targeting specific organizations, agencies can reach non-traditional labor pools that are often more loyal and better suited for the unique demands of transit.

Strategic Partnership Framework

1. Workforce Development & "Grow Your Own" Partners

These organizations are the primary engine for your CDL and training pipelines.

- **PA CareerLink® Offices:** Coordinate with local offices for "on-the-job" training subsidies and to host targeted recruitment events.
- **Local CDL Schools & Trade Schools:** Establish "Guaranteed Interview" agreements for graduates.
- **Apprenticeship Programs:** Partner with the PA Department of Labor & Industry to register official driver apprenticeships, providing a structured pathway for workers.

2. Demographic-Specific Outreach

Broadening candidate profiles is critical in the 2026 labor market.

- **Veterans Organizations (VFW, American Legion):** Veterans often possess the discipline and safety-first mindset required for fixed-route operations.
- **Refugee & Immigrant Resettlement Groups:** These groups provide a dedicated workforce seeking stable, community-centered roles; agencies should focus on "English for Transit" support if needed.
- **AARP & Senior Centers:** Ideal for recruiting retirees for **Shared Ride** positions. Use AARP-specific job boards and local community newsletters.
- **Neighborhood & Faith-Based Centers:** Use these "hyper-local" partners to find drivers who live directly on or near the routes they will serve, reducing their own commute stress.
- **Social Service and Affinity Organizations:** Allows transit agencies to reach individuals who are actively seeking stable, community-oriented career paths. These individuals often view a position in public transit not just as a job, but as a life-changing opportunity for economic mobility and professional status.



Partnership Engagement Template

Partnership Engagement Template

The "Value Proposition" Pitch

When approaching a potential partner (e.g., a refugee center or a veterans' group), use this framing:

"We aren't just looking for employees; we are offering a stable, union-protected career with a pension and paid training. Our drivers are the lifeblood of this community, and we want to hire people who are already invested in this neighborhood."

Partner Checklist: Success Factors

- **Point of Contact:** Assign one "Recruitment Liaison" from your agency to maintain the relationship so it doesn't wither.
- **Co-Branded Marketing:** Provide the partner with QR-coded flyers or social media assets they can easily share.
- **On-Site Testing:** If possible, bring your recruitment team to the partner's facility to conduct initial screenings or "Realistic Job Previews".

Measuring Partnership Success

Metric	Measurement Goal	Target Benchmark
Partner Referral Rate	Percentage of total applicants that can be traced back to a specific organization or community event.	15–20% of new monthly applicant pool.
Interview-to-Hire Ratio	The efficiency of the partnership; are they sending "job-fit" candidates or just high volume?	3 interviews for every 1 hire.
90-Day Retention Rate	The percentage of partnership hires who reach the 90 day milestone.	85%+ (higher than general web applicants).
Training Success Rate	Percentage of partnership hires who successfully pass CDL/technical training on the first attempt.	90%+ (indicates strong pre-screening by the partner).
Cost-per-Hire (SoH)	Total cost of partnership outreach (staff time/booth fees) divided by the number of hires.	Competitive with or lower than paid social media ads.

Implementation Note for PPTA Members

Success in these partnerships relies on **Leadership Visibility**. Encourage your General Manager or HR Director to personally visit these organizations twice a year to reinforce the "team" environment across the community.

Chester County Department of Community Transit Partnership Program

The Chester County Department of Community Transit – Chesco Connect has partnered with the Chester County Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) and the Chester County Department of Workforce Development to implement a three-week non-CDL driver training program.

The OIC Driver Trainer Program prepares future Chesco Connect drivers to safely transport seniors and individuals with disabilities throughout Chester County. The program combines classroom instruction, required online coursework, and hands-on vehicle training to ensure drivers understand County policies, defensive driving techniques, customer service standards, and use of route management technology such as Ecolane Drivers also receive instruction in accident response, emergency procedures, and Community Naloxone (Narcan) administration. A strong emphasis is placed on ADA compliance, passenger assistance, and mobility device securement. Trainees complete both written and practical training on wheelchair loading and proper restraint systems, along with supervised ride-alongs.

All participants that successfully complete the program are guaranteed to get an interview with Chesco Connect for a full-time driving position.

This is the OIC Website where the program is listed: <https://ccoic.org/program-calendar/>

Please reach out to Chester County Department of Community Transit with any questions.

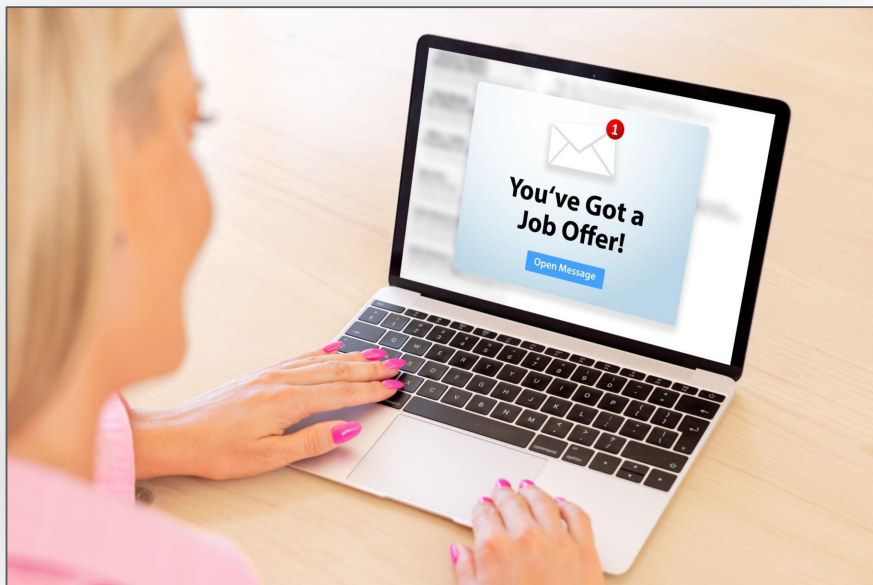


Hiring Practices

Hiring Guidelines

Once the recruitment process has successfully identified a pool of qualified candidates, the agency's focus must shift from attraction to the rigorous "Compliance First" framework of the hiring phase. This transition is a critical juncture where the agency must balance speed with professional scrutiny. In the competitive Pennsylvania labor market, "Speed is a Best Practice", the time elapsed between a successful interview and a conditional offer can determine whether a top-tier candidate joins your team or accepts an offer from a private-sector competitor. However, in the transit industry, this speed must never come at the expense of safety; rather, it should be achieved through the standardization of administrative workflows and the use of "Quick-Turn" background check vendors.

Moving into hiring best practices means translating complex regulatory requirements into a clear, candidate-friendly experience. This phase is governed by a strict hierarchy of PennDOT and Act 153 mandates that ensure every operator is physically capable, legally cleared, and mentally prepared for the responsibilities of public service. By treating the hiring process as a "Mutual Fit" period, clearly communicating the "why" behind DOT physicals, the FBI Fingerprint and Child Abuse Clearances, and the "PA Triple Check" background process-agencies can reinforce their commitment to safety from the very first interaction. The following section outlines the essential benchmarks for maintaining a compliant, high-quality hiring pipeline that protects both the agency and the community it serves.



Driver Hiring Best Practices:

Hiring Process Best Practices

To move candidates through the funnel quickly without sacrificing quality, follow this sequence:

Step A: The 48-Hour Review

- **Practice:** Review Indeed applications within 24–48 hours. The feedback from PA agencies shows that top candidates are often hired by competitors (delivery services, school buses) within 5 days of starting their search.

Step B: The Realistic Job Preview (RJP) Interview

- **Practice:** Don't just ask "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?" Ask situational questions: *"How would you handle a passenger who refuses to pay their fare while you are running 5 minutes behind schedule?"*
- **Incorporate the Ride-Along:** Use the waiver provided earlier in this toolkit to let the candidate see the job firsthand before the formal offer.

Step C: Transparency in Scheduling

- **Practice:** It's important to be fully disclosed with candidates regarding these unique industry related scheduling. Hidden scheduling surprises are a leading cause of 90-day turnover. This applies to any special scheduling or compensation related unique circumstance they might encounter.
 - **Split shifts:** Explain the "Spread Time" and how they are compensated during the gap.
 - **Extra Board:** Often agencies hire for their driver pools. This means that shifts and hours are both flexible and unpredictable.
 - **New Hire Training Schedule:** typically is full time and on day shift, this is significantly different than the potential shift needs that follow training.

Step D: Physical Requirements

- **Practice:** Don't forget this critical part of the job. Be sure to provide applicants with the job description and physical requirements of the position during the interview process. While the application should include a question asking if they are able to perform the job functions of the job with or without accommodations, the interview should reinforce this by having them directly review and acknowledge the physical requirements.

Sample Interview Guide

To ensure you are hiring for "career-fit" rather than just a technical skill set, the interview guide should focus on behavioral questions that reveal a candidate's resilience, customer service orientation, and safety mindset. In addition to the basic interview questions, consider adding behavioral questions into your process.

Below is a structured sample guide designed for Pennsylvania transit agencies.

Part 1: The "Realistic Job Preview" (Opening)

Before asking questions, provide a clear picture of the role to ensure the candidate understands the "realities" of the driver's seat.

- **The Script:** "Being a professional operator at [Agency Name] means managing tight schedules, navigating Pennsylvania weather, and being the face of our community. It's a job that requires extreme patience and a high level of responsibility. Does that align with what you are looking for in your next career move?"

Part 2: Behavioral Interview Questions

Focus on these four core competencies to predict long-term retention.

1. Reliability & Responsibility (The "Anchor" Metric)

- **Question:** "Our riders depend on us to be on time, every time. Can you tell me about a time in a previous job when you had a personal emergency or obstacle that threatened your attendance? How did you handle it?"
- **What to look for:** Does the candidate take personal ownership of their schedule and understand the impact of their absence on the team?

2. Stress Management & De-escalation

- **Question:** "Describe a situation where you had to deal with an angry or frustrated customer/client. What was the conflict, and what specific steps did you take to remain calm and resolve the situation?"
- **What to look for:** Evidence of "soft skills"-the ability to stay professional under pressure without taking passenger frustration personally.

3. Safety Awareness & Compliance

- **Question:** "Transit involves following strict safety protocols and pre-trip inspections daily. Tell me about a time when you noticed a safety hazard or a policy being ignored at work. What did you do?"
- **What to look for:** A candidate who values safety over speed and is willing to speak up or follow protocol even when it's inconvenient.

4. Adaptability & Problem-Solving

- **Question:** "Driving a route often involves unexpected detours, traffic, or mechanical issues. Give me an example of a time your 'plan for the day' was completely disrupted. How did you adapt?"
- **What to look for:** Flexibility and the ability to maintain a positive attitude when "things go sideways."

Part 3: Retention-Focused Closing

Instead of just asking for questions, gauge their long-term interest.

- **Question:** "What is the one thing you need from a supervisor to feel supported and stay with an organization for the long haul?"

Driver Hiring Policy and Best Practices

To ensure your agency remains compliant with both Federal and Pennsylvania-specific regulations while maintaining the high standards required for public safety, your hiring policy should be structured as a "Compliance First" framework.

In Pennsylvania, transit hiring is governed by a combination of **Federal Transit Administration and PennDOT requirements** and **Act 153** (if transporting minors).

Driver Hiring Policy & Best Practices

1. Minimum Qualification Standards

To maintain a high-quality pipeline, your policy should clearly define the "Floor" for applicants:

- **Age:** Minimum 21 years of age (Federal requirement for interstate; highly recommended for PA intrastate transit for insurance and maturity).
- **Licensure:** Must possess a valid PA Driver's License (Class C for Shared Ride; Class B with P endorsement for Fixed Route).
- **Driving Record (MVR):** Employer must have clear expectations and be consistent with regard to traffic violations, DUI/DWI convictions and "Major" violations (e.g., Reckless Driving, Leaving the Scene).

2. The Regulatory "Must-Haves" (Compliance Checklist)

Pennsylvania transit agencies must adhere to strict vetting protocols before a driver ever touches a steering wheel. These must be conducted post offer as a contingency of employment:

- **Application:** Must be completed or can not hire under DOT rules.
- **DOT Physical (Medical Examiner's Certificate):** Drivers must be cleared by a professional on the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners.
- **Background Clearances (The "PA Triple Check"):**
 1. **PA State Police Criminal History (PATCH).**
 2. **PA Child Abuse History Clearance** (Required if the route services schools or minors).
 3. **FBI Fingerprinting** (Federal Criminal History Background Check).
- **Drug Screening:** ARD program must be excluded as a finding according to PA Law. Prior Employers should be contacted for prior drug failures.
- **MATP Verification and Exclusions Check:** Required if agency receives MATP funding and ensures there are no outstanding issues with OIG, DHS, etc. <https://www.verifycomply.com/>

Strategic Tip for PPTA Members

Speed is a Best Practice. The faster you can move from "Interview" to "First Day of Training," the lower your "Candidate Ghosting" rate will be. Since the Child Abuse Clearance can take a long time for results, the offer letter indicating contingency allows for wiggle room if you need to hire PRIOR to receiving results. See Sample Offer Letter.

[Sample Hiring policies - click here](#)

Other Hiring Practices to Consider

Beyond traditional technical evaluations, the integration of **personality and behavioral assessments** into the hiring process serves as a vital predictor of long-term job-fit and safety. In the transit industry, driving skill is only one half of the equation; the other half is the "emotional labor" required to handle stressful traffic, difficult passenger interactions, and the isolation of the road. Assessments tailored for transit look for specific traits such as **conscientiousness, emotional stability, and impulse control**. These tools help agencies move away from gut-feeling hiring and toward a data-driven approach that identifies candidates who possess a natural "service-mindset" and a temperament that won't easily fray under the pressures of a strict schedule. While these assessments shouldn't be used as the only determinant of fit for the organization and position, it can confirm information otherwise assessed during the interview process.

Furthermore, these assessments provide a roadmap for post-hire support. By identifying a candidate's potential friction points such as a tendency toward frustration in high-traffic scenarios the agency can proactively work with the individual. This allows the onboarding process to be personalized, transforming the assessment from a gatekeeping tool into a retention strategy. When combined with a **Realistic Job Preview**, personality assessments ensure that both the agency and the candidate are entering the relationship with a clear understanding of the psychological demands of the professional operator role, ultimately reducing the likelihood of early-stage burnout.

Here's a vendor that specifically assesses in the Transit Industry for Drivers:



While this is not the only service, nor is it being specifically promoted in this toolkit, it is one that was recommended by one of the PA Transit Agencies.

[Agency Recruiting and Retention resources](#)

Sample Policy Language: "Safety-Sensitive" Hiring

Policy Statement: *[Agency Name] is committed to providing safe, reliable transportation to local citizens. All driving positions are classified as "Safety-Sensitive" and are subject to pre-employment, random, post-accident, and reasonable-suspicion drug and alcohol testing in accordance with 49 CFR Part 655.*

Standard Operating Procedure:

1. **Conditional Offer:** All offers are contingent upon the successful completion of a DOT physical, drug screen, and background checks.
2. **Previous Employer Check:** [Agency Name] will contact all previous DOT-regulated employers from the past 3 years to verify safety and drug/alcohol history.
3. **Training Probation:** New hires will remain in a "Probationary Status" for the first 90 days, during which performance and attendance will be monitored daily. This probation period may be longer based on if there is a Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The "Translation" Table: From HR to Human

Use this table when writing your policy or training hiring managers to ensure they communicate the "Why" behind the rules.

Policy Term	Candidate-Friendly Explanation
Safety-Sensitive Position	"Because lives are in your hands, we have the highest safety standards."
Medical Examiner's Cert	"We need a doctor to confirm you're healthy enough for the physical demands of driving."
MVR Check	"We're looking for a history of responsible decision-making on the road."
Probationary Period	"This is our 'Mutual Fit' period to ensure you love the job and we love your work."

Offer Letter Sample: [click here](#)

Hiring Incentives- provided by PPTA members

“Puzzle Piece” Flexible Scheduling

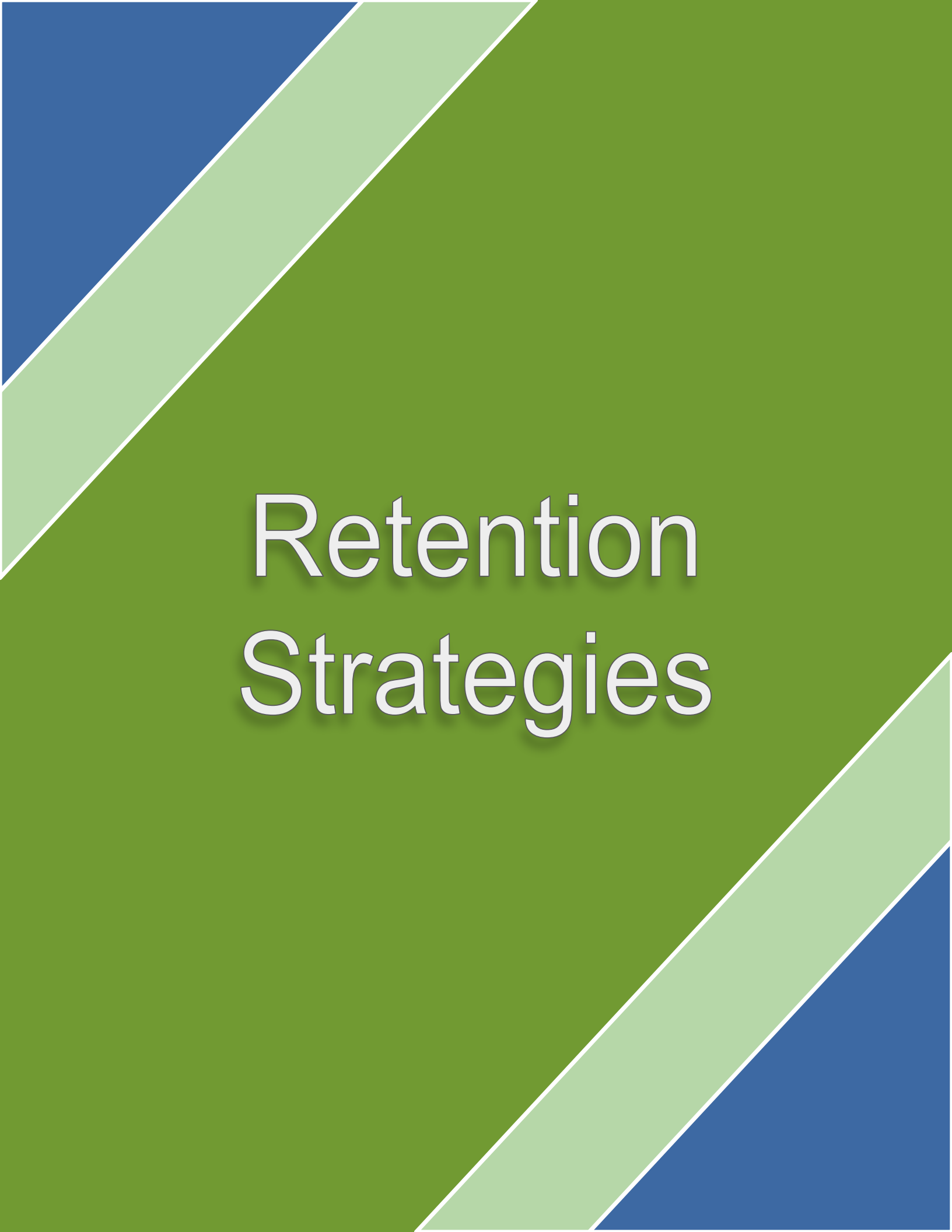
Rather than requiring rigid schedules, BCT accommodates candidates who can only work certain days or limited hours. While this adds scheduling complexity, the return has been significant: these employees are deeply loyal and often the first to pick up extra shifts or come in at a moment's notice when we're in a bind. This flexibility allows BCT to compete for talent even with lower pay rates, because the personal accommodation we offer is a differentiator candidates genuinely value.

New Driver Sign-On Bonus – \$500

BCT offers a \$500 sign-on bonus distributed in milestones: \$100 at 2 months, \$150 at 6 months, and \$250 at 9 months. This incremental structure incentivizes new hires to remain through the critical first year when turnover is historically highest.

Retention Bonus

TransNet offers a \$1,000 retention bonus to staff of our partners/subcontractors following two full years of service, matched by our partners/subcontractors for a total of \$2,000 and awarded immediately following their two-year anniversary



Retention Strategies

Retention Strategies Overview

To build a robust "career-building" culture within Pennsylvania's transit agencies, retention must be treated as a proactive, structured journey rather than a reactive response to turnover. This begins during the **"Golden Window" of onboarding**, moving away from simple paperwork toward a phased **30/60/90-day integration plan**. By focusing on technical proficiency in the first month, transitioning to revenue service with support in the second, and moving toward solo operation with weekly check-ins by the third, agencies can effectively prevent "new-hire overwhelm" and address field stress before it leads to resignation.

This "Golden Window" is the most critical period for early retention, where intentionality in the onboarding process can transition a new hire into a long-term professional operator

A comprehensive retention strategy includes a combination of training and formal recognition to build employee morale. Additionally, frequent and visible recognition-ranging from milestone-based bonuses to small "pop-up" treats-counters the "invisible driver" feeling and reinforces that the agency values its workforce's safety and dedication.

Long-term stability is maintained through continuous feedback loops, such as **Stay Interviews**, which identify operational friction before it leads to turnover. By proactively addressing issues like unrealistic timing, equipment maintenance, or dispatch communication, management demonstrates respect for employees and their contributions. Ultimately, these strategies strengthen the social fabric of the agency, turning a high-risk turnover period into a clear and supported career path.

The background of the slide features a large green rectangle. In the top-left and bottom-right corners, there are diagonal stripes in blue and light green. The word "Onboarding" is centered in the green area in a white, sans-serif font.

Onboarding

Onboarding Template

A structured onboarding process ensures that the heavy investment made in recruitment and technical training isn't lost, but is instead anchored by a sense of belonging and a clear roadmap for career longevity.

Structured Onboarding & Early Retention

1. The 30/60/90-Day Integration Plan

A phased approach prevents "new-hire overwhelm" and ensures consistent touchpoints during the highest-risk turnover period.

- **Days 1–30 (The Learning Phase):** Focus on technical proficiency, safety protocols, and classroom/hands-on training.
- **Days 31–60 (The Transition Phase):** Move from the training environment to "revenue service" while receiving real-time feedback.
- **Days 61–90 (The Independence Phase):** Solo operation with scheduled weekly "check-ins" from HR or a direct supervisor to address any "field stress".

2. Multi-Modal Training Techniques

Agencies should move beyond "death by PowerPoint" to keep candidates engaged.

- **Classroom Instruction:** Covers CDL theory, DOT regulations, and agency policy.
- **Hands-On/Behind-the-Wheel:** Practical skills training in the yard and on-route.
- **Online/Digital Modules:** Self-paced learning for software, GPS systems, and HR documentation.

3. Consistent Supervisor & HR Check-ins

Structured communication ensures the employee feels heard and valued from day one.

- **The Week 1 Coffee:** A 15-minute informal chat with the Executive Director or Manager to build rapport.
- **60 Day Check In:** A brief "pulse check" to identify if the job matches the "Realistic Job Preview" provided during recruitment.

Sample Onboarding Schedule

Phase	Timeline	Focus Area	Key Activities & Milestones
Phase 1: Learning	Days 1–30	Technical & Safety Foundation	- Classroom training: CDL theory, DOT regulations, Safety rules and agency policy; building, system and technology access; HR onboarding documents. - Hands-on yard training: Vehicle inspections and maneuverability. The "Week 1 Coffee": Informal chat with a supervisor to build rapport. - Introduction to assigned trainer
Phase 2: Transition	Days 31–60	Revenue Service with Support	Driving: Operating routes with a trainer present for real-time feedback. - Passenger interaction: Hands-on experience with fareboxes and ADA securement. Day 45 Pulse Check: Brief survey to ensure the job matches the "Realistic Job Preview."
Phase 3: Independence	Days 61–90	Solo Operation & Professionalism	- Solo operation on assigned routes. - Weekly check-ins with Supervisors to address observations and challenges - Focus on schedule adherence and consistent safety rituals. - Review of internal career paths (e.g., Fixed Route "Bridge" training).
The Graduation	Day 90+	Validation & Career Commitment	Retention Bonus Trigger: Official payout of the first milestone-based bonus. - Formal transition to "Professional Operator" status.



New Hire Training Resources

Driver Specific Online Training Resources

FTA Drug and Alcohol

New Hire

Reasonable Suspicion

TSI Training

SMS Awareness

Fatigue and Sleep Apnea Awareness

PennDOT

End Human Trafficking

PennTrain

Transit 101

Communication Skills 101

Other:

YouTube: [Assault Awareness for Transit Operators](#)

Security and Threat Awareness

Polaris Project: [Human Trafficking](#)

Technical Training Comparison Table

While the classroom and yard provide the theoretical foundation, **On-the-Job Training (OJT) conducted by a Certified Technical Trainer** is where a driver’s skills are pressure-tested in the real world. This phase represents a formal, documented period of instruction where the trainee operates the vehicle in revenue service under the direct supervision of a certified expert. Unlike informal peer support, OJT with a certified trainer is a structured evaluation of the driver’s ability to manage vehicle clearance, passenger safety, and schedule adherence simultaneously.

This transition from the yard to the street is a critical gatekeeping phase of the onboarding process. The Certified Trainer provides immediate, corrective feedback on professional maneuvers—such as precision docking and navigating tight intersections—ensuring that safety protocols become muscle memory. By the end of this period, the trainer must officially sign off on the driver’s competency, providing the agency with the documented assurance that the operator is prepared for solo service and meets all state and federal safety benchmarks.

Skill Area	Shared Ride Persona	Fixed Route Persona
Primary Tech	Lift & Tie-down Systems	Pneumatic Air Brakes
Routing	Dynamic/On-demand Tablet	Fixed Timeline/GPS Headway
Communication	"Dead-head" & Gate Coordination	Dispatch & Emergency Transit Alerts
Physical Requirement	Manual assistance & securement	Extended high-focus driving shifts

The background of the slide is a solid green color. It is decorated with diagonal stripes in the corners. The top-left and bottom-right corners feature a blue stripe, while the top-right and bottom-left corners feature a light green stripe. The stripes are separated by thin white lines.

Employee Engagement

Introduction to Employee Engagement: Building a "Stay" Culture

In the modern transit landscape, employee engagement is the proactive engine that drives long-term retention. For Pennsylvania transit agencies, engagement must move beyond static benefit packages to create a dynamic career-building culture where every operator feels seen, heard, and valued. By shifting the focus from simply filling seats to fostering a sense of professional purpose, agencies can combat the high vacancy costs of early-stage turnover and build a stable, resilient workforce. This approach is built on a foundation of open dialogue, frequent validation, and modern social connectivity.

At the heart of a robust engagement strategy are **Stay Interviews**, which serve as a critical listening tool to identify operational friction before it leads to a resignation. Unlike exit interviews, which capture data too late to save an employee, Stay Interviews allow management to engage in a transparent exchange about what keeps a driver behind the wheel. By asking targeted questions about route timing, facility access, and workplace respect, agencies demonstrate that they value the driver's daily experience and are committed to making the driver's seat a sustainable place to work.

The psychological anchor of engagement is reinforced through **Rewards and Recognition Programs**. Effective transit agencies move away from singular, large-scale annual events toward high-frequency, small-scale gestures such as "pop-up" treats at dispatch or milestone-based retention bonuses. Recognizing achievement through data-driven metrics like safety records and attendance, or through peer-nominated awards, ensures that excellence is visible. This culture of appreciation transforms the often-isolated role of a driver into a communal effort, where personal milestones become shared agency victories.

Finally, **Social Media** serves as the digital megaphone for these engagement efforts. By utilizing platforms like Facebook and Instagram to spotlight Operators of the Month, share behind-the-scenes Day in the Life content, and celebrate service anniversaries, agencies bridge the gap between internal culture and public perception. Social recognition not only boosts the morale of current employees but also acts as a powerful recruitment tool, showing prospective hires that the agency is a modern, supportive community. When combined, these strategies ensure that transit professionals are not just employees, but feel like a vital component of the workforce.

Stay Interview - Driver Specific Questions

Goal: To understand what keeps a driver behind the wheel and what might drive them away.

Who Conducts It: A direct supervisor or a member of the HR Team.

When: Conduct at the 6-month mark, 1-year mark, and annually thereafter.

Section 1: The Daily Grind (Operational Friction)

- **Is there a specific part of your current route or run that consistently causes you frustration?**
 - *Why ask:* Identifies safety hazards, bathroom access issues, or unrealistic timing in the schedule.
- **How would you rate the communication you receive from Dispatch when things go sideways (accidents, detours, weather)?**
 - *Why ask:* Poor communication is a top driver of "shift stress" in both Urban Fixed Route and Rural Shared Ride.
- **Do you feel the equipment you are operating is being maintained to a standard that makes you feel safe?**
 - *Why ask:* Bridges the gap between the maintenance shop and the driver's seat.

Section 2: Culture & Union Relations

- **Do you feel that your seniority and your contributions are respected by management?**
 - *Why ask:* In a union shop, "respect" is often tied to how rules are applied across the board.
- **If you could change one thing about the bidding process or how shifts are assigned (within the limits of the contract), what would it be?**
 - *Why ask:* While you can't break the CBA, this provides data for the next round of negotiations or side letters.

Section 3: The Future & Retention

- **What part of your benefits package (Pension, Healthcare, PTO) is the most valuable to you right now?**
 - *Why ask:* Helps the agency and union highlight the "total rewards" that younger drivers often overlook.
- **What is one thing that happened recently that made you think, 'I'm glad I work here'?**
 - *Why ask:* Identifies the positive "anchor" points you can use in recruitment marketing.
- **On a scale of 1–10, how likely are you to recommend [Agency Name] as a place to work to a friend or family member? Why that number?**
 - *Why ask:* This is your "Net Promoter Score" for the workforce.

Employee Engagement & Culture Programs

1. Milestone & Personal Acknowledgements

Personalized recognition counters the "invisible driver" feeling often reported in high-volume transit roles.

- **Birthday Recognition:** Send personalized cards signed by the General Manager or Department Head. Some agencies provide a Birthday Floating Holiday or a small gift card to a local coffee shop.
- **Service Anniversaries:** Celebrate work anniversaries publicly on recognition boards or in agency newsletters.
- **Longevity Awards:** Pair traditional certificates with the tiered retention bonuses mentioned in the budget calculator (e.g., a special 1-Year Milestone pin or vest patch).

2. Operator of the Month (OOTM) Program

A structured OOTM program provides a target for high-performance and safety standards.

- **Selection Criteria:** Use data-driven metrics such as perfect attendance, zero preventable accidents, and commendations from passengers.
- **The Reward:**
 - Dedicated parking spot near the depot entrance for the month.
 - Feature in the internal newsletter, Community section on HRIS tool, and on social media channels.
 - A formal "Commendation Letter" placed in their personnel file (highly valued in union environments for future promotion tracks).
- **Peer-Nominated Awards:** Allow drivers to nominate their colleagues for going above and beyond, fostering a culture of mutual respect.

3. Small-Scale, High-Frequency Appreciation

Agencies have found that frequent, small gestures often have a larger impact on daily morale than one large annual event.

- **"Pop-Up" Treats:** Provide coffee, donuts, or healthy snacks at the dispatch window during shift changes or early morning pull-outs.
- **Appreciation Weeks:** Participate in **National Transit Employee Appreciation Day** (March 18) with catered meals, agency-branded apparel (hats/hoodies), and "thank you" banners at facilities.
- **Leadership Visibility:** Ensure leadership is present in the breakrooms and during pull-outs to offer face-to-face thank yous, which significantly improves internal communication.

4. Safety & Performance Incentives

Traditional recognition is most effective when it reinforces core agency goals

- **Safe Driving Certificates:** Publicly honor drivers who reach 5, 10, or 20 years of accident-free driving.
- **Attendance Rewards:** Provide small monthly incentives (gift cards or "tokens") for those with zero unexcused absences, helping to reduce the Vacancy Costs identified in your budget.

Alignment with Agency Feedback

- **Frequent and Visible Recognition:** The recommendation for "Pop-Up" treats and appreciation weeks directly mirrors the survey's strongest and most detailed theme regarding frequent, small rewards like gift cards, treats, and large-scale appreciation events.
- **Data-Driven Awards:** Using perfect attendance and safety records as criteria for "Operator of the Month" aligns with the feedback that agencies heavily rely on safety awards, bonuses, and performance recognition to drive engagement.
- **Peer-Nominated Success:** The inclusion of peer-nominated awards was a specific strategy highlighted in the survey as an effective way to build morale.
- **Milestone-Based Rewards:** The shift toward celebrating service anniversaries and longevity pins reflects the survey's takeaway that incentives are most effective when tied to retention milestones (90 days, 1 year, etc.) rather than just upfront sign-on bonuses.
- **Leadership Presence:** The Leadership Visibility tactic addresses the survey's finding that employees stay when they feel heard and valued through the physical presence of leadership and strong internal communication.
- **Internal Communication:** Utilizing newsletters and recognition boards to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries incorporates the survey's recommendation to use these channels to foster a sense of community.

Agency Retention Programs - TransNet

Excellence Awards- Biannual

At least one outstanding employee from each partner location is recognized for excellence two times annually typically (July and January). Eligible employees are hardworking, dependable, exceed expectations, receive consumer compliments, or have a record without complaints or incidences. The employee(s) receives a financial award and breakfast, or lunch is provided for all Partner employees on the day of recognition.

“High Five” Awards- Biannual

An expansion of the Partner Excellence Awards that includes an additional award called the "High Five" Award. This award is presented to an employee(s) that may not have been perfect over the last 6 months, however they have gone above and beyond as an employee and deserve something for their effort. This award would recognize these employees but on a smaller monetary level.

“On a Roll” Awards- All Compliments

The “On a Roll” Customer Compliment Initiative is designed to celebrate and reward employees who go above and beyond their day-to-day responsibilities in delivering exceptional service. Whenever a client submits a compliment recognizing an employee's outstanding performance, we acknowledge that effort with a fun, meaningful token of appreciation. As part of this initiative, recognized employees receive a King Size Tootsie Roll, a customized “On a Roll” card (styled after a classic Tootsie Roll wrapper), and a \$10 Wawa Gift Card. The gift card is presented inside the themed card, accompanied by the Tootsie Roll candy—creating a memorable, unified “On a Roll” experience. This program reinforces our commitment to exceptional customer service while fostering a culture of recognition, motivation, and appreciation throughout the organization. Each reward is a small but impactful way of saying: Thank you for being on a roll and making a meaningful difference for our customers.

Safety Blitz Incentive Program

The Safety Blitz Program is to improve overall safety awareness, policy compliance, and quality of service for our clients. The secondary goal of the program is to create positive influence and culture of teamwork. Throughout the year, the TransNet Risk Management Department will send each of the partner locations a Safety Blitz Packet with safety information and posters. The Safety Blitz Posters will be posted on the designated “Blitz Boards” at each partner location. (i.e. employee break room). The Safety Blitz Posters on the Blitz Boards will be made for a “Safety Topic of the Month” (i.e., Distracted Driving Awareness Month). The posters will contain important safety information, graphics, and pictures pertaining to the “safety topic of the month”. Responding to the Safety Question, on the poster, will enter employees into the safety blitz prize drawing. For an employee to be entered into the safety blitz prize drawing, they must submit their complete name, partner location, and a correct response to the safety question by the designated deadline. Deadlines will be clearly printed on the Safety Blitz Posters. All correct submissions will have their name put into the random prize drawing. Winners of the drawing receive a prize. Prizes will vary from gift cards to company merchandise. The number of prizes given away will be based off the total employee participation at each partner location. The more people that participate in the safety blitz, the more prizes will be given to the employees.

Accident-Free Shirts

Our "Accident/Incident Free" Safety Shirt initiative recognizes drivers who demonstrate exceptional commitment to safe operations by maintaining a completely accident- and incident-free record throughout the entire calendar year. Eligible employees—those free of any preventable accidents or in-house incidents—receive a distinct “Accident/Incident Free” uniform shirt, designed to highlight their professionalism and serve as an optional daily uniform shirt. This program reinforces our safety culture while celebrating the drivers who exemplify excellence behind the wheel. Each year a different color shirt is awarded.

More Retention Programs - Bucks County Transport

STAR Employee Bonus Program (Quarterly)

A peer-driven program celebrating employees who demonstrate BCT's core values. The quarterly winner receives a \$500 bonus, framed certificate, recognition pin, newsletter and social media feature, and a celebration ceremony. All nominees receive \$50 as well.

Safety Bonus Program (Semi-Annual)

Drivers who maintain an incident-free and collision-free record over each six-month period receive a bonus based on days worked per week multiplied by months worked. Our CEO personally champions this program and challenges the entire team to qualify each cycle.

"Way to Go" Wawa Gift Card Program (\$25 / \$100)

Employees who go above and beyond or receive compliments from passengers, families, or coworkers receive a \$25 Wawa gift card for immediate, real-time recognition. For truly extraordinary achievements, our CEO personally awards a \$100 gift card accompanied by a handwritten note – a personal touch that signals exceptional work is noticed at the highest level.

"Take Out the Garbage" Program (\$100 Drawing)

This program addresses a real operational challenge: inaccurate destination pins for locations with confusing or multiple pickup/drop-off points. Employees who identify and correct these pin locations earn an entry into a \$100 gift card drawing, incentivizing the team to proactively improve route accuracy and service quality.

Structured Onboarding & Training

BCT's training program is highly interactive and tailored to each new hire. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, we pace training to fit each individual's learning needs and combinemultiple methods – written materials, hands-on interactive training, computer-based modules, and one-on-one time with an assigned mentor driver. Throughout the process, we are carefully vetting candidates to ensure we are partnering with quality individuals who genuinely care about our mission and passenger safety. This thorough, personalized approach means the drivers who complete our program are well-prepared and invested in BCT's success.

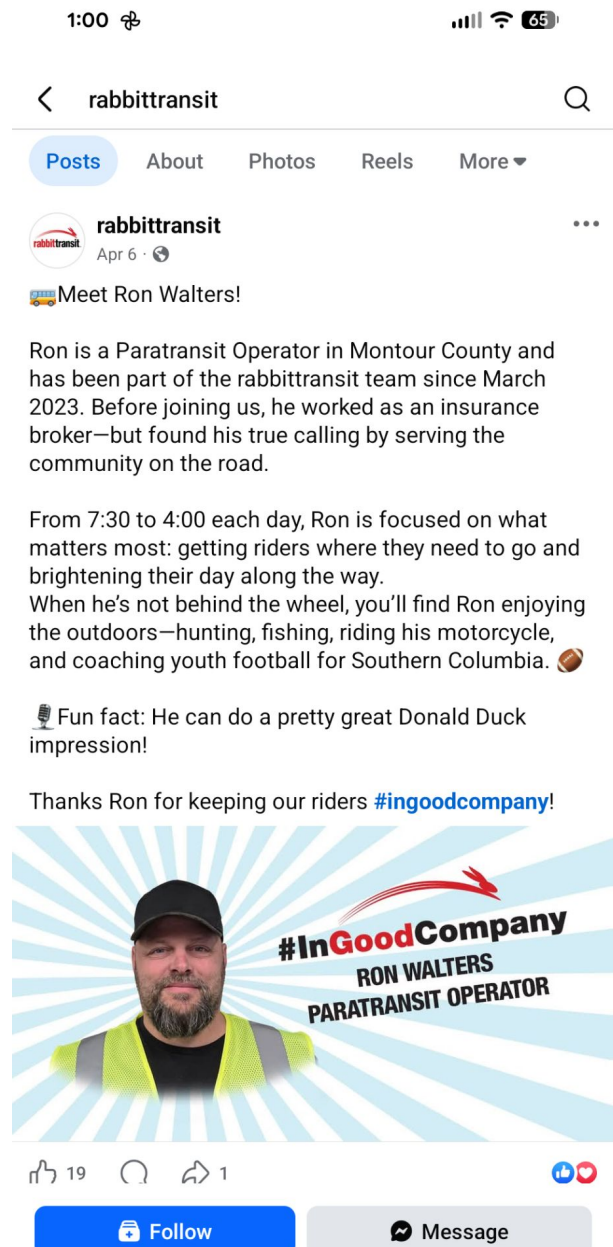
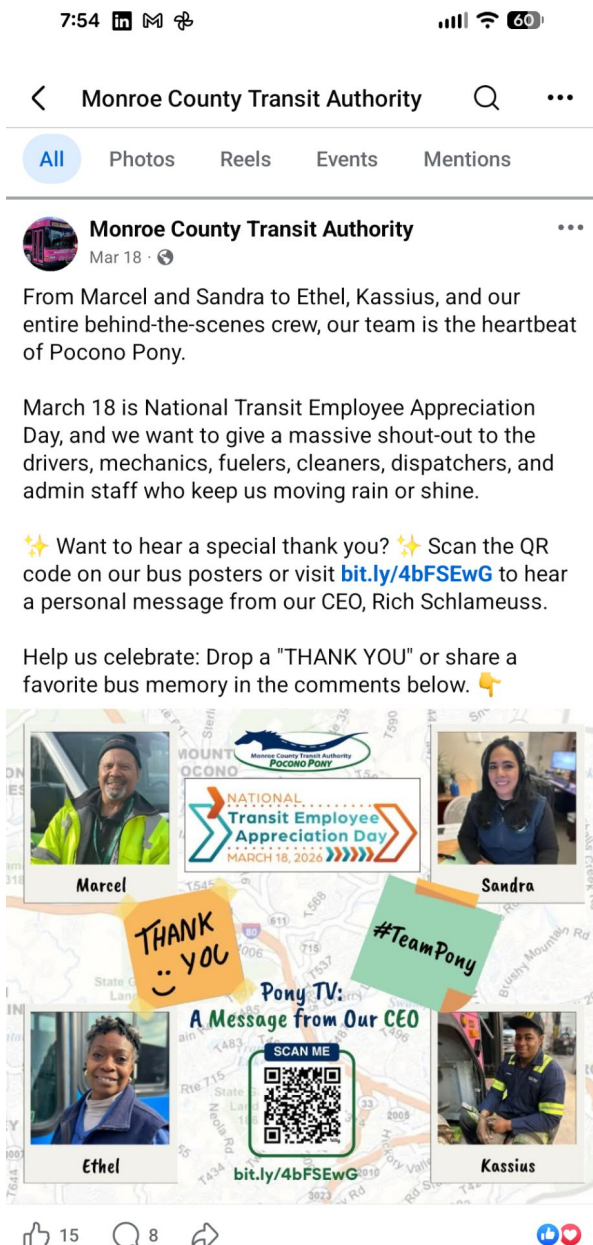
- Dedicated Driver Trainer Supervisor: Full-time position coordinating all driver training, incident handling, and professional development across all terminals
- Structured onboarding plans: with daily objectives, ride-alongs, progressive responsibilities, and regular supervisor check-ins
- Multi-modal training: TAPTCO certification, wheelchair securement with annual recertification, ODP compliance, and assigned mentor drivers for hands-on learning
- Cross-training & advancement: Pathways from driver roles into dispatch, scheduling, training, and supervisory positions

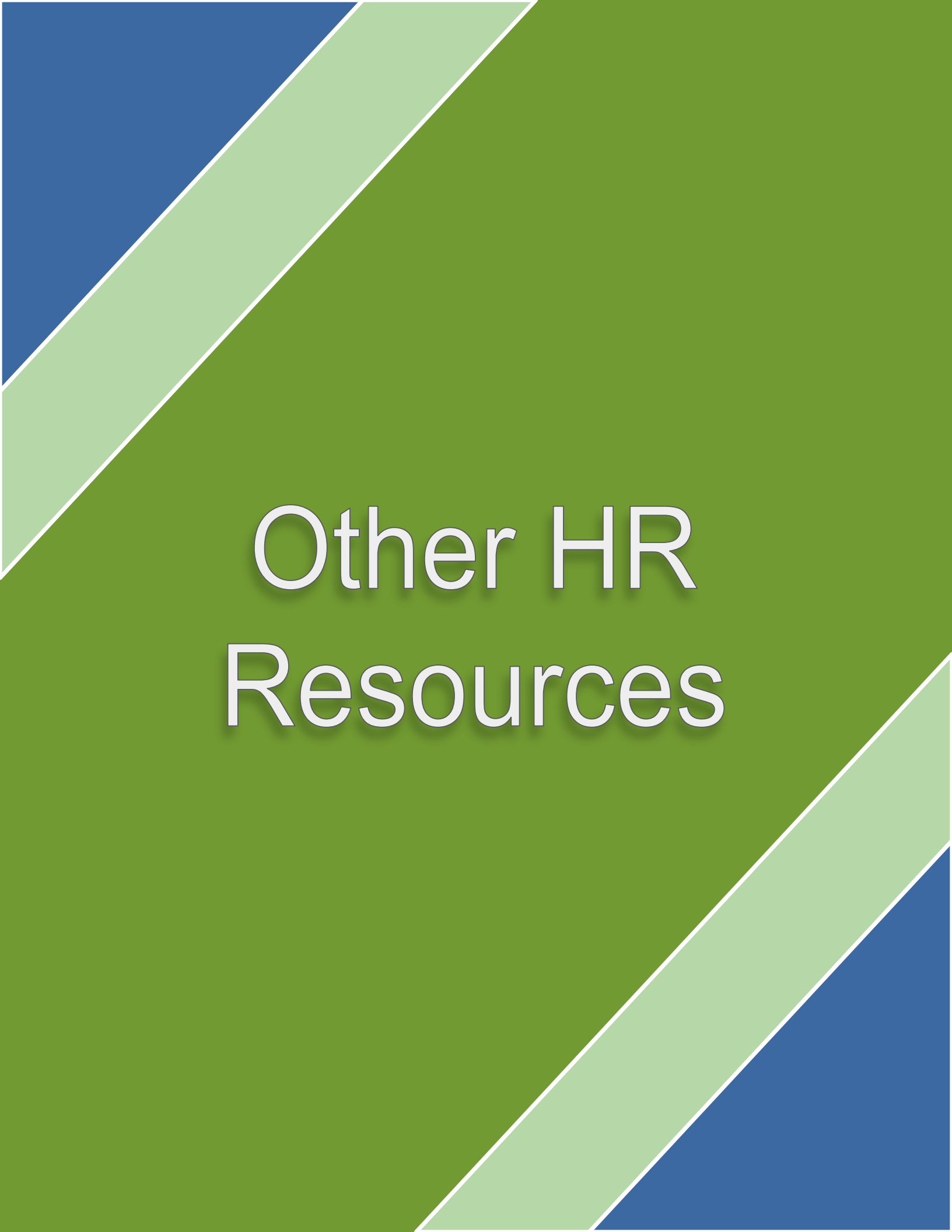
Professional Development & Work-Life Balance

BCT supports long-term career growth through PPTA Leadership Cohort participation, Certified Community Transit Supervisor coursework, and TAPTCO trainer certifications. Additionally, BCT's Overtime Reduction Initiative – including Paylocity-integrated alerts, supervisor pre-approval requirements, and strategic part-time hiring – demonstrates our commitment to sustainable, balanced schedules for all employees.

Social Recognition

Social recognition plays a vital role in transit retention by transforming "invisible" shifts into celebrated contributions, fostering a sense of belonging and professional pride. When an operator's employment/safety milestones or community service are acknowledged publicly, it reinforces their identity as a vital and contributing member of the organization.





Other HR Resources

Other Toolkit Resources

Agencies do not have to build these programs from scratch. Several national and state-level organizations provide templates and case studies specifically for the transit sector:

- **Transit Workforce Center (TWC):** The technical assistance center for the FTA, offering extensive toolkits on apprenticeship and recruitment. <https://www.transitworkforce.org/resource/>
- **National RTAP:** Provides the "Transit Manager's Toolkit," which is invaluable for rural and small-urban agencies. <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Transit-Managers-Toolkit>
- **PA Department of Labor & Industry:** A key partner for registering apprenticeships and accessing CareerLink® resources. www.dol.gov
- **SHRM & EEOC:** Essential for staying updated on general HR best practices, labor laws, and compliance regarding fair hiring.
 - www.shrm.org
 - www.eeoc.org
- **Federal Transit Administration Workforce Development Reports:** Research and best practices on transit workforce challenges and training. <https://www.transit.dot.gov>

Driver Hiring and Training

SAFTI members will use an approved Driver Management Policy for hiring – reasonable standards for driving experience, driving record, and criminal record.

- **Bus Drivers**

- ⇒ Minimum of 3 years licensed (any class) for all drivers
- ⇒ Minimum hiring age of 21 with additional hiring criteria as follows:
 - o Additional hiring criteria for ages 21 and 22 as follows:
 - 100% clean MVR at hire
 - Pass a Personality Assessment approved by SAFTI
 - Quarterly MVR checks until age 23
 - At least one documented anonymous onboard evaluation or vehicle shadowing observation annually from date of hire until age 23
 - At least one quarterly documented random video review from date of hire until age 23
 - * Documentation of evaluations and observations must be completed on standard SAFTI forms and be a minimum of 15 minutes in length.
 - o Additional hiring criteria for ages 23 and 24 as follows:
 - 100% clean MVR at hire
 - Pass a Personality Assessment approved by SAFTI

SAFTI members will develop and meet minimum training standards for:

- New Driver Training – All new driver hires will undergo new driver training through
 - o PennTRAIN's Master Trainer, TransitSCORE, or PennSCORE programs,
 - o Daecher Consulting's online modules, and/or
 - o TAPTCO video training.
- Remedial Training – All preventable accidents will result in appropriate remedial training.
- Refresher Training – All drivers who have been employed for at least 12 months will complete annual refresher training.

SAFTI members will have a graduate of PennTRAIN's Master Trainer, TransitSCORE, or PennSCORE on staff or will have access to a graduate who will supervise driver training.

Training files will be reviewed annually by Daecher Consulting Group.

Sample Job Offer Letter

Date _____

Mr./Ms _____

Street Address _____

City State Zip Code _____

Dear _____

Congratulations! On behalf of our Executive Staff, we are excited to extend the offer of employment for the position of _____, with **AGENCY NAME**, contingent upon successful completion of background checks (criminal, FBI and child abuse clearance), drug screening and physical clearance. This contingency remains in effect even if results of these screenings are received by **AGENCY NAME** after your date of hire.

Please review the terms and conditions of your employment, should you accept the offer.

Your estimated start date is _____. The actual date will be finalized and communicated to you once we've received the results of your pre-employment screenings. You will report to **LOCATION and ADDRESS**. _____ will review your responsibilities and job description with you on your first day of employment.

Your hourly wage is _____, and you will be paid on a **weekly** basis each **Friday**. Your wages are subject to deductions for taxes as required by law, as well as withholdings and adjustments reflective of company policies.

This is a **full-time/part-time** safety sensitive position requiring **HOURS (# of hours)** hours per week. Your supervisor will discuss your work hours and scheduled days off. Please note that our hours of operation are Monday through Saturday, 3:30AM to 11:30PM. Staff must be flexible to work any shift during the stated hours.

As a full-time employee you will be eligible for health, paid time off, life insurance and retirement benefits. You will become eligible to enroll in these benefits on your 90th day of employment.

Your employment at **AGENCY NAME** is *at-will*, meaning your employment is for no fixed period and you or **AGENCY NAME** can terminate the employment relationship at any time with or without cause.

*Welcome to **AGENCY NAME**!* We wish you a very successful career with us.

Please indicate your agreement with these terms and accept the above offer by signing and dating this agreement. Please scan and return to me by **DATE** to the email listed below.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at **PHONE NUMBER and EMAIL ADDRESS**.

Sincerely,

NAME

Human Resources Manager

Candidate's NAME Signature

Date

Fixed Route Operator

Shared Ride Operator

[Click here](#)



Thank you