

# Practitioner's Guide to Bus Operator Workforce Management

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

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

# Introduction

Bus operators are 60% of the public transit workforce

Many agencies are experiencing difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified operators

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

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

COVID-19 exacerbated workforce management and development challenges

# Case studies

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

# Key elements of bus operator workforce management

## Transit Bus Operator Management Elements



# Forward-thinking approaches



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

# Forward-thinking approaches



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

# Forward-thinking approaches



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

# Forward-thinking approaches



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



# Forward-thinking approaches



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

# Forward-thinking approaches



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

# Forward-thinking approaches



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

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