



APTA STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

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APTA Bus Operations Working
Group

Recruiting and Retaining Bus Operations Employees

Abstract: This *Recommended Practice* will assist transit agencies in recruitment and retention of bus operations employees.

Keywords: bus, employee, recruiting, retaining

Scope and purpose: This *Recommended Practice* is intended to assist transit agencies in recruiting and retaining bus operations employees by identifying best practices. This document is intended for use in transit and paratransit bus operations.

Summary of Recommendations:

- Understand workforce and turnover
- Update and review job descriptions on a regular basis
- Select an assessment tool to qualify each candidate
- Conduct a new-employee orientation
- Foster open communication, teamwork and opportunities for growth
- Provide the necessary training for employee development
- Create a mentoring program for new employees
- Provide annual performance evaluations that establish goals and recognition for good performance

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1. Recruitment

1.1 Determining service requirements

When determining the agency's staffing needs, all of the following need to be considered:

- current and future service changes
- labor issues
- historical PTO and unpaid time off

1.2 Understanding turnover

1.2.1 Demographics

Current work force:

- Understanding the age and diversity of your work force
- Understanding current work force trends and turnover

Available work force:

- Where does your work force come from?
- Local unemployment rate

1.2.2 Exit interviews/surveys

- Understanding current work force trends and turnover
- A formalized process of data collection
- Track the information/results
- Utilizing information to retain and enhance employees.

1.2.3 Competitors for work force

Wages and benefits in the local area:

- local cost of living
- attractive and competitive benefits package

Working conditions:

- daily schedules (split shifts, weekend work, days off)
- driving conditions (inclement weather, traffic, road conditions)
- public interaction (difficult customers, people with disabilities)

2. Operator hiring process

2.1 Job description

Agencies should review and update job descriptions on a regular basis based on current laws, regulations and duties. Minimum requirements may include age, education, driving record and experience pertinent to the job description. It is also recommended that job descriptions also include a statement of requirement of an applicant to successfully complete a pre-employment physical and drug screening.

Examples of job descriptions are presented in Appendix A.

2.2 Marketing

- local and community newspapers and publications
- referrals
- job service
- Internet
- job fairs
- bus and transit center advertising
- employee incentive referral

2.3 Application

Agencies should collect a completed employment application. Applications may be handwritten or completed online.

2.4 Screening

2.4.1 Assessment testing

It is recommended that agencies select an assessment tool to qualify each candidate. It is also recommended that agencies assess and require all candidates to demonstrate the ability to read, write and speak English.

Some assessment tools include the following:

- **BOSS (Bus Operator Selection Survey).** BOSS is a selection process software consisting primarily of a pre-employment screening survey and structured interview process. The 75-item BOSS survey is administrable by means of paper-and-pencil or online via computer (“eBoss”). With eBoss, test results are available immediately for online testing and for paper-and-pencil tests when administrators enter candidate responses into the system.
- **Wonderlic Testing.** Short-form employment test that measures cognitive ability or general intelligence. (Other types of Wonderlic tests are available.)
- **Manpower.** A two-part survey designed for pre-employment selection. Part 1 survey consists of direct admission questions. These are essential inquiries that could be asked during an interview. Part 2 surveys attitudes toward integrity, drug use, reliability and work ethic.
- **Personnel Selection Inventory.** The Personnel Selection Inventory (PSI) is a pre-employment assessment designed to help identify individuals most likely to make strong employees.
- **TotalView Assessment.** A pre-employment screening tool used to identify work-related behaviors such as positive service attitude, accountability, frustration, and tolerance, acceptance of diversity, multitasking, validity check and integrity index.

2.5 Interview

Agencies should consider developing a uniform set of questions to ask each applicant (see Appendix B). Utilizing a panel to interview the applicants is recommended. A panel may include supervisors, trainers and a human resource representative. Each interviewee should review and accept the agency’s policies, employee handbook and labor contract, if applicable.

2.6 Candidate selection

Agencies should select the best-qualified candidates to process through to pre-employment screening. Steps include:

- application
- drug testing

- prior employment reference checking
- DMV record check
- job stability
- previous driving experience
- age
- criminal background check
- structured (from written items) interview
- interviews with two or more interviewers

2.7 Pre-employment screening

It is recommended that agencies utilize all available record checks, and the following:

- DOT medical certification
- pre-employment drug test
- functional capacity test or test showing physical ability to perform job duties

3. Job offer

It is recommended that a tentative job offer should be given in writing contingent upon successfully completing the agency's minimum requirements. Offer letter should include conditions of employment including but not limited to the following:

- work schedule
- uniform requirements
- union membership, if applicable
- training schedules

4. Hire

It is recommended that agencies conduct a new-employee orientation to review and distribute all pertinent documents, benefits, policies and procedures. It is also recommended that new employees are introduced to key personnel and become aware of the organizational structure.

4.1.1 Orientation

Review, distribute and explain the following:

- benefit package
- policies and procedures (i.e. EEOC, harassment, ADA)
- drug and alcohol awareness
- labor contract, if applicable
- safety and security
- organizational structure and mission statement

4.1.2 Training

- Customer service:
 - communications
 - customers with disabilities
 - difficult situations
 - basics (Customer Service 101)
 - system orientation
- Technical:

- vehicle familiarization
- energy sources
- vehicle inspections
- Bus operating skills:
 - in-service operation
 - route training
 - communications equipment and systems technology:
- Safety, security and risk management:
 - operator safety
 - customer safety
 - vehicle emergency procedures
 - security emergencies
 - incident response (reporting and documentation)
- Agency orientation
- Interpersonal skills:
 - customer service (internal and external)
 - diplomacy and negotiating skills
 - training, coaching and mentoring
- Regulatory:
 - Federal and state regulations

START Training is a video-based training package that can be used for new operators and for refresher training. It provides in-depth instruction designed to help operators understand the part they play in providing and promoting public transportation.

DCC – 8 is an eight-hour defensive driving course that can be used for new operators and for in-service training. It is a comprehensive and interactive course that gives operators practical knowledge and techniques to avoid collisions and violations, and to choose safe, responsible and lawful driving behavior

5. Retention

5.1 Salaries and benefits

It is recommended that agencies offer a salary and benefits package that is competitive and comparable to the market.

- Plan could include medical, dental, vision, pension and child/elder care benefits.
- Sequential step for salary increases.
- Tie incentives to performance (if possible).

5.2 Guaranteed hours

Agencies should offer a minimum number of hours per week for part-time operators.

- Offer creative work scheduling, in terms of hours and days off.
- Offer part-time operators the ability to trade assignments with full-time operators.
- Avoid long splits; offer straight hours.
- Consider eliminating part-time work.

5.3 Working conditions

The organizational culture should foster open communication, teamwork, integrity, accountability and opportunities for growth. The organization should provide a safe working environment. Adequate resources should be made available to the employee to perform assigned duties.

- Ensure open communications by providing a confidential channel for employee feedback.
- Consider a daily pep talk at the beginning of each shift.
- Hold town hall-style meetings.
- Have employees complete a job satisfaction survey.
- Provide personal protection equipment, including latex gloves and hand sanitizer wipes.
- Institute effective safety and security programs.

5.4 Employee career path development

Agencies should create and maintain an environment that allows employees to grow professionally.

- Offer an apprenticeship program for crafts workers.
- Make sure employees are aware of prerequisites for career progression. For example, eligibility requirements to become a dispatcher could be five years' experience as a bus operator, one year as a line operator, and three years as a line supervisor.
- Conduct internal job fairs for other opportunities within the organization.
- Provide coaching and mentoring.
- Provide training for career progression.

5.5 Continuing education

Agencies should encourage and support employees' efforts to seek continuing education courses. Agencies may also consider offering a tuition reimbursement plan for employees.

- Partnership with local community college
- Consider offering classroom space at agency.
- Supervisor/management prep
- Computer skills
- Budget and finance
- Offer flexible work schedule for class attendance.

5.6 Training

Agencies should provide the necessary training to allow for employee development and organizational change (new policies and procedures, new services, new fare structure). The types of training can include the following:

- **Succession training.** Career progression for supervision or management. The tools that could be provided for succession training include but are not limited to the following:
 - resume building
 - interview skills
 - goal development
 - written and oral communication skills
 - interpersonal skills
- **Cross-training.** Training in other departments within the agency. Also, training within the department in other classifications.

- **New technologies.** Remaining current on new equipment, software and other technologies. Establish appropriate performance standards with vendors for training.
- **Other training.**
 - Recertification
 - Performance improvement
- **Individual training** (after an accident or incident)

6. Mentoring

Agencies should create a process or program of having a veteran employee to coach and support new employees. Examples include the following:

- line instructor
- volunteer mentor program
- paid mentoring
- instructor/supervisor as mentor

6.1 Probationary evaluation

The agency should evaluate the employee's performance with the employee prior to the end of the probationary period.

6.2 Performance evaluations

The agency should provide annual performance evaluations that establish goals and recognition for good performance.

7. Employee care

- Health and wellness:
 - Diabetes
 - fatigue
 - high blood pressure
 - obesity
 - eating habits
 - access to exercise facilities
 - Employee Assistance Program
- Driver qualification:
 - Motor vehicle requirements
 - DOT requirements
- Performance incentives/recognition:
 - monetary and non-monetary
 - team-building exercises
 - group events (picnics, corporate challenge, bus rodeo)
 - perfect attendance
 - Safe Driver Award
 - peer recognition
 - public commendations
 - employee newsletter
 - using award-winning employees as the "face" of the agency for training and promotional materials

7.1 Agency committee involvement

Make sure committees are effective and valuable. Consider incorporating employee input for service planning, new projects and new equipment. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- Safety/Security Committee
- Labor/Management Committee
- Wellness committees
- Service excellence committees

7.2 Community service/involvement

Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- Bus buddy (travel training for seniors and mobility impaired)
- Adopt-a-school
- Represent agency at community meetings
- School Career Day participation
- Service quality teams

Appendix A: Examples of job descriptions

- Bus Operators are included in this bargaining unit and follow the collective bargaining agreement. Schedules and days off are bid on by seniority and all Bus Operators are to follow the contract guidelines whether part of the bargaining unit or not.
- Bus Operator's MUST be able to work DAYS, SPLIT-SHIFTS, NIGHTS, SATURDAY, SUNDAY and HOLIDAYS and be flexible to work any shift any time. This is a 24/7 operation.
- You must have a clean driving record and Florida driver's license. If you do not have a current LOCAL CDL license, Class B (with a Passenger endorsement) you must have your permit before your start date.
- Bus Operators must attend an 8-week training course prior to operating a bus on their own.
- Bus Operators are eligible for medical/dental benefits 120 days from hire date. The actual introductory period is 120 days from the end of the 8-week training period. You will actually receive your benefits prior to completing your probationary period.
- As a professional, you are required to present a well-groomed appearance at all times. Which includes being in proper complete uniform when reporting for duty. **This also includes keeping your hair, sideburns, mustaches and beards will be neat, clean and trimmed.** You will be checked to ensure that you meet the uniform and appearance code.
- There is a Customer Service Skills assessment test that is administered, Monday through Friday from 8:15am to 1:30pm. Seating is limited and is on a "first come, first serve" basis.

Appendix B: Standard interview questions

Applicant: «Interviewee»

Date:

Interviewing Representatives: Bus Operator Trainer ,(Transportation Supervisor) and
(HR representative)

Tell us about your understanding of the job you are applying for?

What specific kind of work do you most enjoy doing?

What is the one accomplishment you are most proud of? Why?

What qualities of your supervisor and co-workers bother you most?

If you only had three words to describe yourself, what would they be?

Give us an example of a time when you had to address an angry customer/individual. What was the problem and what was the outcome?

Tell us about a decision that you made while under a lot of pressure.

What have you done in your present/previous job that goes beyond what was required?

How have you handled situations in which you could not understand a customer's/individual's strong accent?

If your last supervisor were asked to describe you in three words, what would they be?

What are some things that your last employer could have done to keep you at that job?

While driving your route you smell smoke. You realize a customer is smoking a cigarette in the back of the bus. How would you handle this situation?

This job requires that you be able to follow both written and verbal instructions and effectively communicate in English, both orally and in writing. Will any of this present a problem for you?

This position requires that you be able to work days, nights, weekends and holidays. If selected for this position, would you be able to meet these requirements?

What made you apply for this position?

Comments

Recommended for Hire?

Yes

No

Signature: _____

References

American Public Transportation Association *Recommended Practice* APTA BTS-BO-RP-001-07: “Transit Bus Operator Training Operating,” 2007.

National Training Institute (NTI): <http://www.ntionline.com/>

Transportation Safety Institute (TSI): <http://www.tsi.dot.gov/>

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA): <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/>

Definitions

recruitment: The process of attracting adding new individuals to an organization.

retention: The ability to keep employees, once hired, on the job.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADA	Americas with Disabilities Act
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DOT	Department of Transportation
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
PSI	Personnel Selection Inventory
PTO	paid time off