

Successful Strategies for Hiring Rural and Tribal Transit Operators

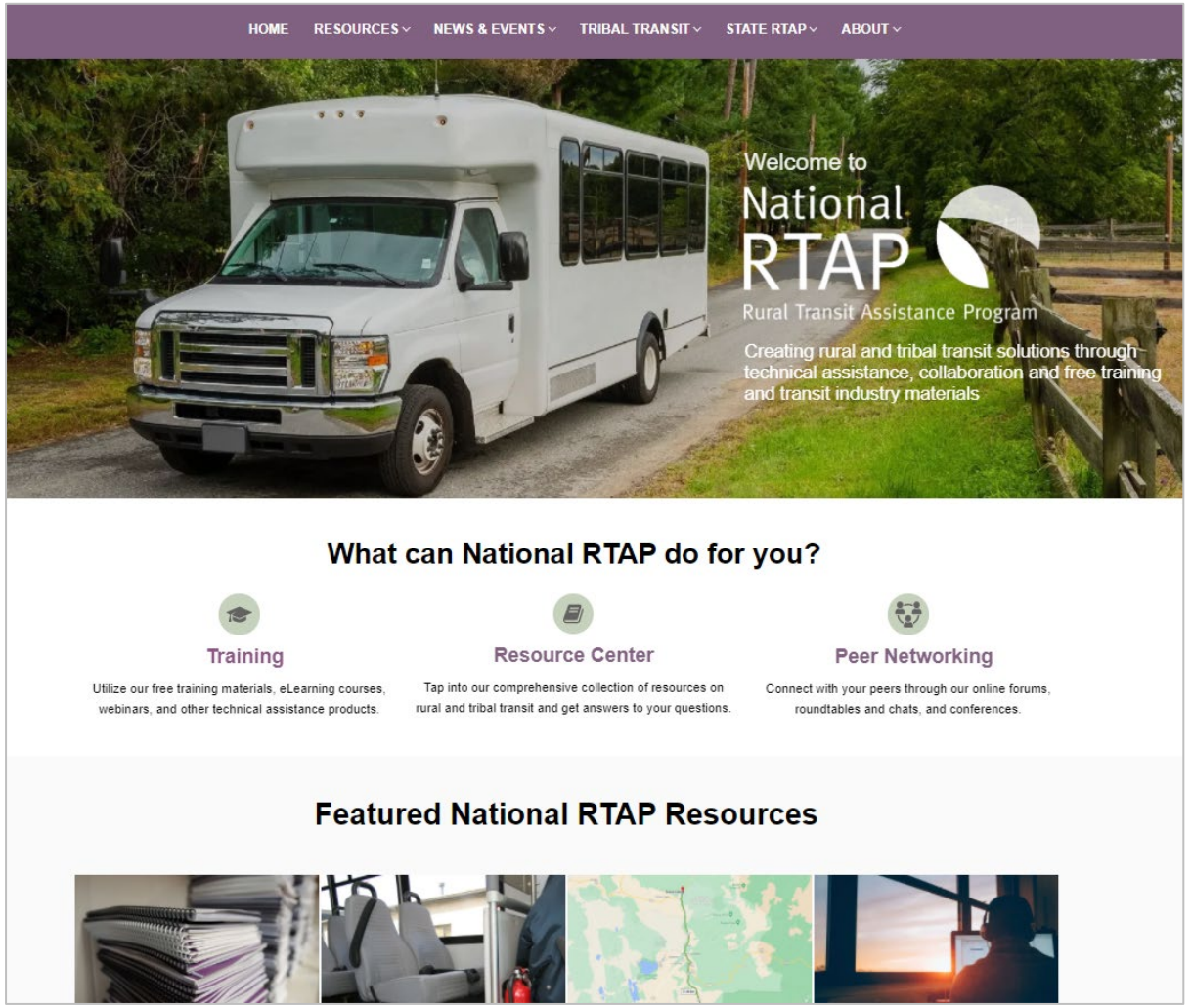
June 15, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

National RTAP
Rural Transit Assistance Program

Federal Transit Administration

National Rural Transit Assistance Program

- Technical assistance center funded by FTA through Section 5311
- No-cost training and technical assistance resources and services
- For rural and tribal transit providers and state programs
- Guided by a 14-member Review Board from state DOTs and transit providers
- Offices in Massachusetts and Washington, DC
- Learn more at nationalrtap.org



National RTAP Resources and Services

Training

manuals, videos, slides, and eLearning for front-line staff and management

Information

and best practices via tech briefs, toolkits, topic guides, articles, and news

Technology Tools

for procurement, cost allocation, website building, and GTFS

Peer Networking

and training via webinars, conferences, roundtables, and online forums

Assistance

through research, reference services and tech support – bring us your questions!

Attendee Polls

- How many driver/operator vacancies does your organization currently have?
- Are you also struggling with hiring other positions at your organization?

Introductions



David Stephen

Senior Communications Specialist

International Transportation Learning Center (ITLC)

Transit Workforce Center (TWC)



Julia Castillo

Executive Director

Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA)

Transit Workforce Center

Federal Transit Administration

National Technical Assistance Center for Transit Workforce Development

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION LEARNING CENTER

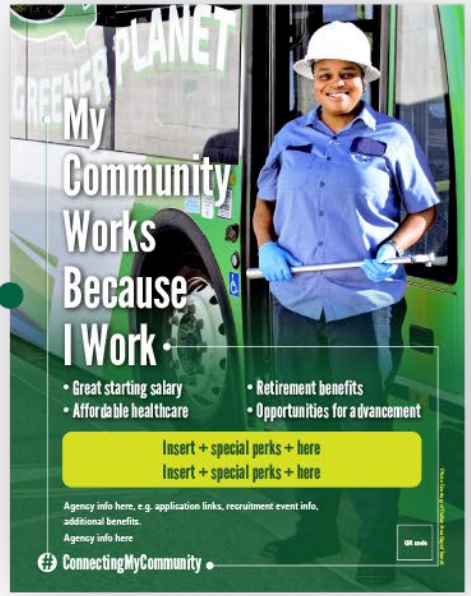
Transit Workforce Center's National Transit Frontline Worker Recruitment Toolkit Strategies for Rural Recruitment

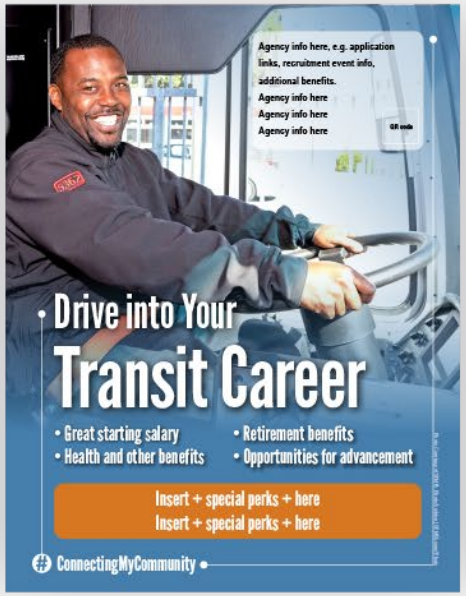
June 15, 2023

TWC • TRANSIT WORKFORCE CENTER

#ConnectingMyCommunity

National Transit Frontline Worker Campaign Toolkit



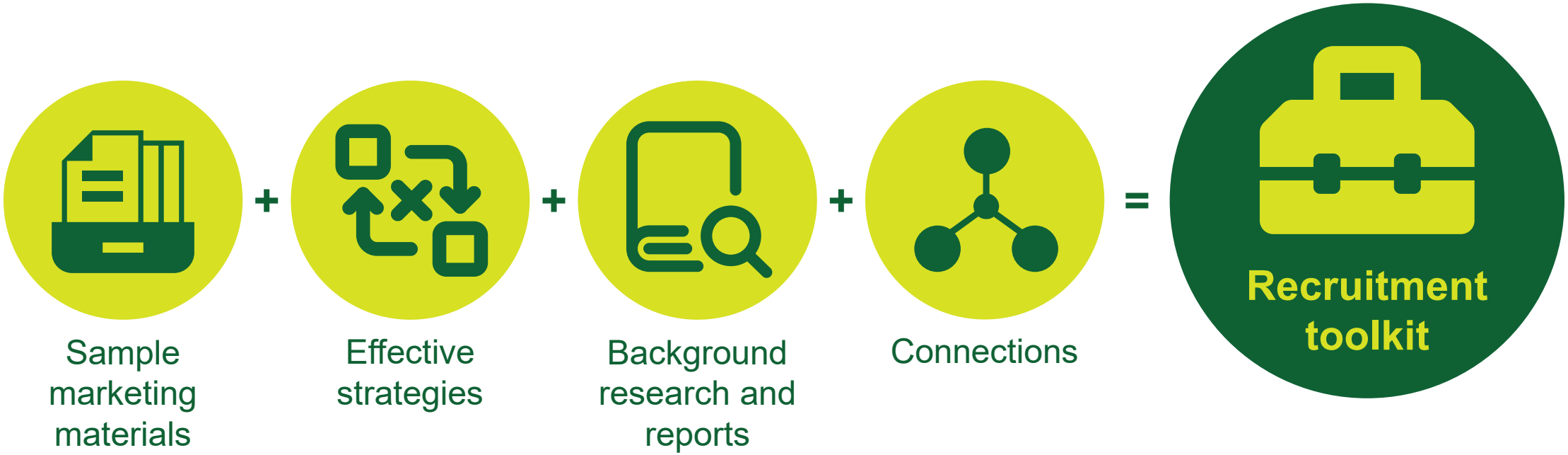




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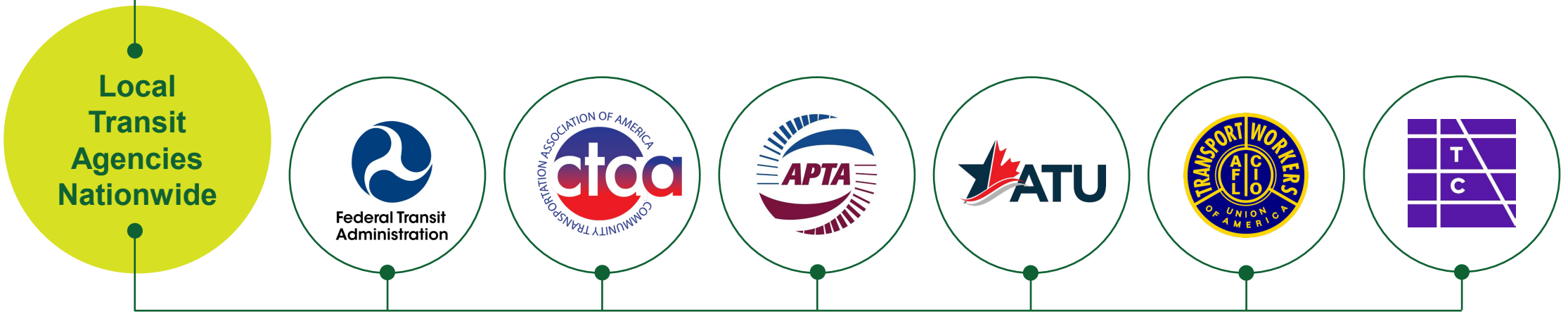
What is the National Transit Frontline Worker Campaign Toolkit?

A central repository of:



Working in Partnership to Respond to a Critical Need

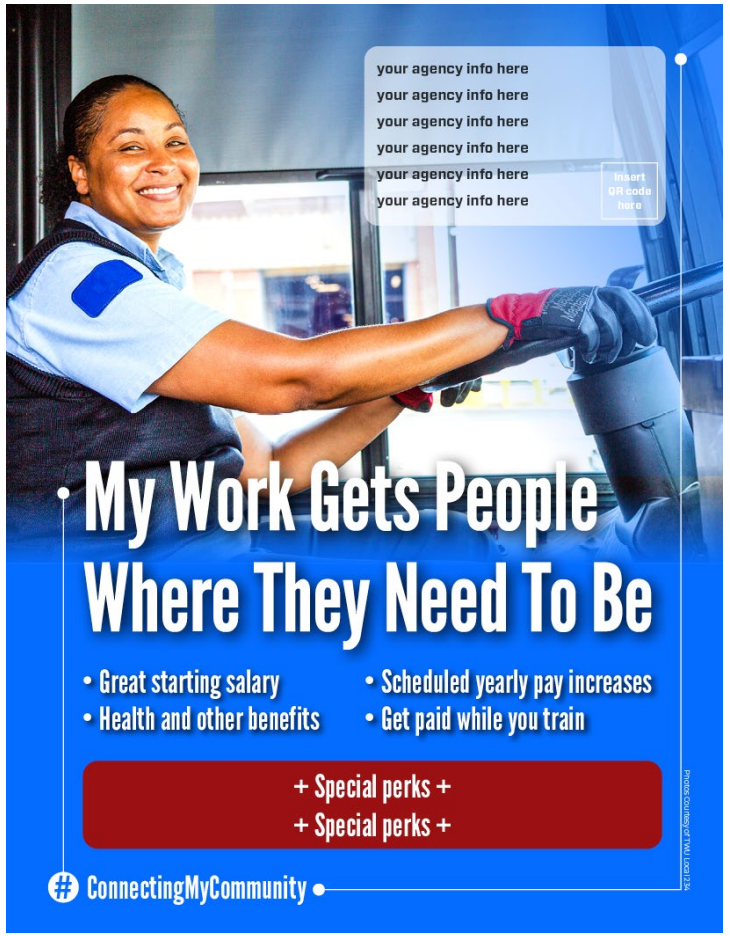
Local Agencies and Partners Across the Nation



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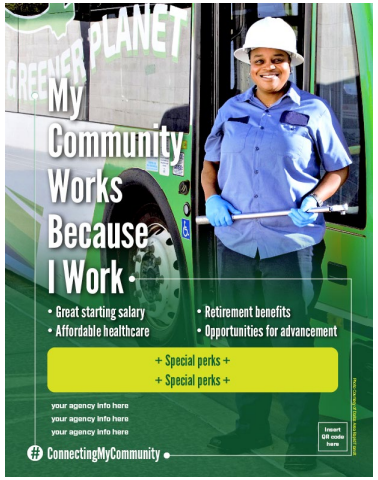
Themes Created from Consultations with Partners

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



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Advertising Templates Using Themes

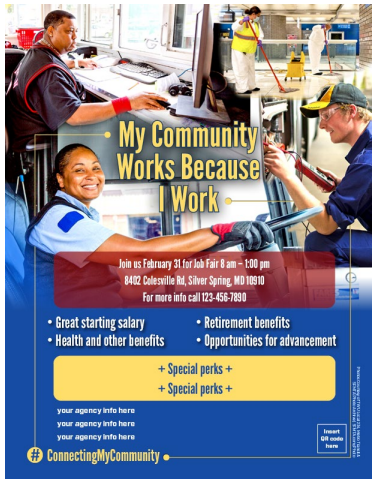












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How to Customize the Ad Template

1. Open the file in Adobe Acrobat app

2. Fill in
   + Agency information (e.g. application links, recruitment event info, additional benefits)
   + Name of your agency
   + Special perks

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

4. Save as a PDF



Sample Case Studies

Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority – Senior Outreach

- Reached out via Cape Cod Elder Services to communicate CCRTA's interest in hiring seniors.
- Targeted recruitment of retiring teachers, firefighters, police, and school bus drivers.
- Visited each town on Cape Cod, talked with local retirement agency officials, and posted and mailed banners and notices.
- Emphasized the short time it takes to reach the highest salary level, a compelling message for seniors and retirees who often value salaries more than benefits, and the ability to reach the highest level within their time at the agency.
- Offered various employment options, including full- and part-time, and seasonal.
- Provided full CDL training, testing, and additional agency-specific training for all employees without CDLs. The agency pays for all training.
- Offered options for non-CDL drivers, who operate smaller vans.

Other Toolkit Components: Agency Recruitment Videos

Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority (MA)



Other Toolkit Components: Agency Recruitment Videos

AppalCART

Boone, North Carolina



Other Toolkit Components: Sample Advertisements



FULL & PART TIME POSITIONS AVAILABLE SERVING:

ALEXANDER COUNTY
BURKE COUNTY
CALDWELL COUNTY
CATAWBA COUNTY

Benefit Package for FULL-TIME positions include:

11 PAID HOLIDAYS
SICK AND VACATION PAY
MEDICAL/DENTAL/VISION INSURANCE - Paid
GROUP LIFE / ADD INSURANCE - Paid
LONG TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE - Paid
EAP for EMPLOYEES & DEPENDANTS - Paid
LOCAL GOVERMENT RETIREMENT (LGERS)
VOLUNTARY LIFE INSURANCE - Provided
SHORT TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE - Provided
401K - Provided
FSA - Provided

GREENway PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Examples of Benefits Used by Agencies

Compensation	Career-specific benefits	Other benefits offered by some agencies
Attractive starting salary	Paid training	Streamlined initial application process
Signing bonuses	Agency-provided CDL training	Part-time options
Pay increase after six months	Opportunities for advancement	Housing-related options
Scheduled pay increases	Tuition reimbursement	Childcare assistance
Medical, vision, and dental care, family healthcare plans	Continuing Education	Retailer and gym discounts
Free transit pass		
Retirement/pension plan		

Strategies for Effective Outreach

- Use messaging and images that reflect your target recruitment audience
- Consider where advertisement can be used
- Populate ads with local images
- Use workers' own words
- Advertise what sets you apart from other careers
- Consider the efficacy of your webpage (see IndyGo mini case study)
- Consider your target audience and what you offer that will appeal to them
- Make the hiring process clear, especially in advertising materials for hiring events
- Develop methods to support the applicants through the process

Strategies to Consider for Rural Areas

- **Salaries:** emphasizing what is special about the agency, including a sense of community, can be important.

- **Outreach:** Sending satisfied experienced drivers out into the community could be helpful, along with considering establishing a formal mentoring program.

- **Partnerships:** with schools, and local community organizations.

Mentoring Programs – Strengthening Recruitment and Supporting Seamless Succession



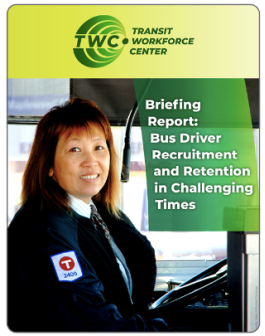
1. Mentors are selected from a pool of experienced drivers to work with mentees to develop the less tangible “soft skills” necessary for the mentee to succeed.

2. Mentors provide moral support and practical, professional advice so that drivers can feel confident and prepared for the job.

3. A strong mentoring program supports retention, other internal succession programs, and can be used as draw for effective recruitment and outreach.

Other Toolkit Components: Background Research and Reports

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



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

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

Transit Workforce Center
April 2022

TOPICS: HIRING AND RECRUITMENT , RETENTION , SAFETY AND HEALTH

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



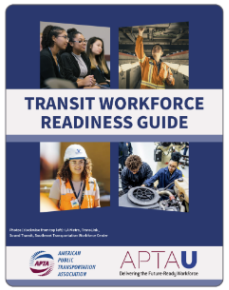
Attracting and Retaining Women in the Transportation Industry

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

Mineta Transportation Institute
February 2019

TOPICS: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION , HIRING AND RECRUITMENT , RETENTION

APTA Transit Workforce Readiness Guide



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

Next Steps

- Use the #ConnectingMyCommunity hashtag in your recruitment materials
- Connect with TWC on your strategies, including if you are applying the toolkit
- Share your campaign materials and effective strategies so that we can add them to our sample materials
- Provide TWC with feedback and suggestions as we move to Phase 2 of the Toolkit



Thank You!

- **David Stephen**
  Senior Communications Specialist
  dstephen@transportcenter.org

TWC TRANSIT WORKFORCE CENTER

RTAP -2023

Public Transit Driver Shortages



Who we are

- In 1981, the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) was formed under a 28E agreement with the 7 counties in central Iowa.

- Region 11, better known as HIRTA, was established to provide public transit services in the counties of Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story and Warren.

Facebook: @RideHIRTA

Twitter: @RideHIRTA

YouTube: HIRTA Public Transit

Website: www.RideHIRTA.com



Change how jobs are advertised

Don't let someone eliminate themselves because of the language you use

- Consider making being an **EEO Employers statement** more important **by what you state and where you place** this statement in your ads.
- Put the qualities **you need in the person**, not the duties they will perform
- The **most important part** you want the potential applicant to see **should be at the top of the ad**. Flexible Hours – No experience needed or Must have CDL or Will train if you have a permit.
- **Eliminate background check** required
- **Flexibility or Assistance in applying**

SAMPLE JOB AD

Full-Time Driver (Day Shift)

HIRTA is an EEO, where we value diversity and strive to expand representation at all levels in our workforce.

$Pay/hr. Need a **Full-Time** (8hr day shift)

If you like to Drive and Help Others - Come join the HIRTA Team! Class C/ Passenger Endorsement required. **We will train.** We are looking for a friendly, reliable person who brings a can-do attitude and a welcoming smile.

We serve a diverse population of people including the elderly, those with disabilities, children and general public. Interviews being scheduled now.

If you need assistance completing our online application, contact us 1-877-686-0029.

Where are you Advertising?





- Job Sites like Indeed?
- Local Newspaper?
- Flyers posted around town?
- Website?
- Job Fairs?
- Back/Side of your Vehicles?

Negatives of Help Wanted Signs?

- Risk of damaging brand image
- Appear understaffed, and therefore unable to provide the service needed
- Perceived as poor working conditions and/or not a good place to work





Make applying as Easy as Possible



Simplify your Job Application Process

- **Ask for minimal information.**
- **Don't require someone to enter info that is already on a resume.**

If you need a complete application for HR purposes, it can be completed upon hire.



SAMPLE JOB APPLICATION

Position applying for? Driver - Floater

First Name Last Name
Phone Number E-Mail Address
Street Address City, State, Postal Code

Check the driver license you possess.

Class C (Non-commercial) Class A
Class B Class D (chauffeur)

Is there any additional information you would like to share with us?

If you would like to upload your resume, please do so here.

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION & AGREEMENT:

I certify that this information contains no willful misrepresentation or falsification and that the information given by me is true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that if employed, misleading or falsified statements on this application may be considered cause for dismissal. Enter your name in the text box below to sign your application and agree to these terms.

Interviews

- Contact applicant for a phone interview.

  This is **NOT** the time to ask about background. That should be saved for an in-person interview.

- In-person interview. Make it easy and comfortable for the applicant to tell you about their past history, without fear of it being an automatic NO in getting the job.



Review and Change Background Reviews

- Limit information in background checks to recent, *occupation-related information*
- Eliminate bans that automatically disqualify applicants with criminal records.

It is more helpful to understand WHY an applicant has a criminal record, than simply knowing THAT an applicant has a record

- Don't make gaps in employment an immediate red flag.

Someone incarcerated will have gaps, however, so will a stay at home parent who didn't work outside the home while children were babies, and often those who work temp jobs can look like they have multiple jobs or gaps.

SAMPLE Background Check Criteria

The following criteria **will NOT** be considered, when evaluating the results of a background check:

- Any conviction for decriminalized conduct
- Arrests that did not lead to a conviction
- A conviction that has been dismissed, expunged, or sealed
- A conviction that is more than 5 years old, unless there are legal requirements tied to the role

Convictions under 5 years old will be reviewed through the individualized assessment process.

Factors that may be taken into consideration prior to making an employment decision, include, but are not limited to:

- The age of the applicant at the time of the offense
- The facts or circumstances surrounding the offense
- The length and consistency of the applicant's employment history before and after the offense
- The relevance of the offense to the position being sought
- The time which has elapsed since the offense
- The number of convictions.


Transit Driver Shortages +
Returning Citizens =
A Winning Solution

MYTH

Once a Criminal, Always a Criminal



A person who's been in the criminal justice system, can't be a trustworthy worker

FACT

Research shows that after a period of time a criminal record doesn't predict future re-offending and offering those with a record, reduces the recidivism rate by more than 10%.



Previously Incarcerated does NOT mean "unskilled"

MYTHS	FACTS
More “cream of the crop” workers will come back to transit.	By age 25, 1 in 3 in the US have been arrested Some highly successful people are felons: Martha Stewart, Judge Greg Mathis, Junior Johnson, Robert Downey Jr., Michael Vick, Marion Jones 
They will not be reliable and will increase turnover.	Due to the scarcity of opportunities for returning citizens, many employers that hire them have lower turnover than with conventional hires. 
It’s not safe to hire someone that has a criminal record. 	Employees with criminal backgrounds are less likely to quit and generally work harder because they know their options for hire are limited.

Why Returning Citizens?

Many must comply with the court-ordered special conditions of their probation or parole and maintain employment, so they have an extra layer of accountability for staying employed.

Giving people a fair chance to be considered for jobs, employers can help keep their communities safer and potentially reduce crime rates by reducing recidivism.

Research shows that employees with criminal histories are often reliable, productive, and positive members of their workplace.



Helps create a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

Why Returning Citizens? (continued)

Many must comply with the court-ordered special conditions of their probation or parole and maintain employment, so they have an extra layer of accountability for staying employed.

Employers can make a considerable difference in transforming a criminal liability into a community asset.

Unemployed ex-felons are at greater risk of re-offending compared those ex-felons who are employed.

Employers with second chance hiring found that individuals with a criminal record were <u>less likely to quit</u>, generating cost-savings related to turnover.



Talented workers are available due to being ignored by the broader workforce.

A few other things to remember

- We have all terminated drivers we hired with a clean background check, so remember….

EVERY Hire is a RISK!

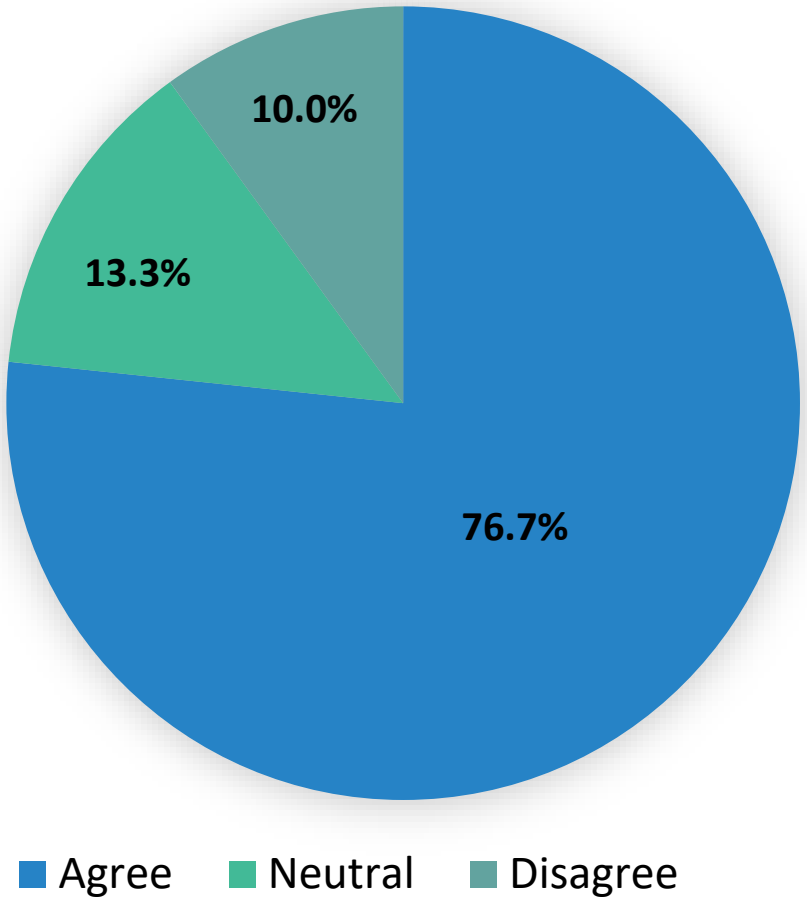
- Make sure you are not violating **any** State or Federal laws that apply to your agency or services.
- Check contracts for language that may prohibit hiring Returning Citizens. If you do have such contracts, have conversations in how that section, or wording can be removed or changed.
- Ensure YOU control the narrative so it stays positive! Let others know what, why and how the community will benefit, calm any fears of safety and/or reliability. Be proud of any program you begin and keep the public informed.
- Check to see if you qualify for the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

Community Perspective

Question: What is your general opinion with regards to hiring reentering citizens as transit drivers?

Agree, Neutral, or Disagree

- **76.7% - Agree**
- 13.3% - Neutral
- 10.0% - Disagree



POINTS to NOTE:

1) Personal Safety was #1 concern among those who disagree

2) Those who disagree were also riders in remote areas traveling longer distances

thank you



Julia Castillo

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she/her

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@rideHIRTA

@rideHIRTA

www.rideHIRTA.com

Resources on Hiring and Retaining Staff

National RTAP Resources:

- Transit Managers Toolkit – Driver Recruitment, Training, and Retention section (2022)
- Salary Ranges for Transit Jobs (2023)
- Applying Good Business Practices: Hiring, Training, and Evaluating Employees Tech Brief (2018)
- Driver Recruitment Hot Topic Guide (2022)
- SURCOM HR Training Shorts

Other Resources:

- TWC Transit Worker Recruitment Campaign Toolkit (2022)
- APTA Transit Workforce Shortage Toolkit (2023)
- TCRP Bus Operator Workforce Management: Practitioner's Guide, *Prepublication* (2023)
- TCRP Vehicle Operator Recruitment, Retention, and Performance in ADA Complementary Paratransit (2010)



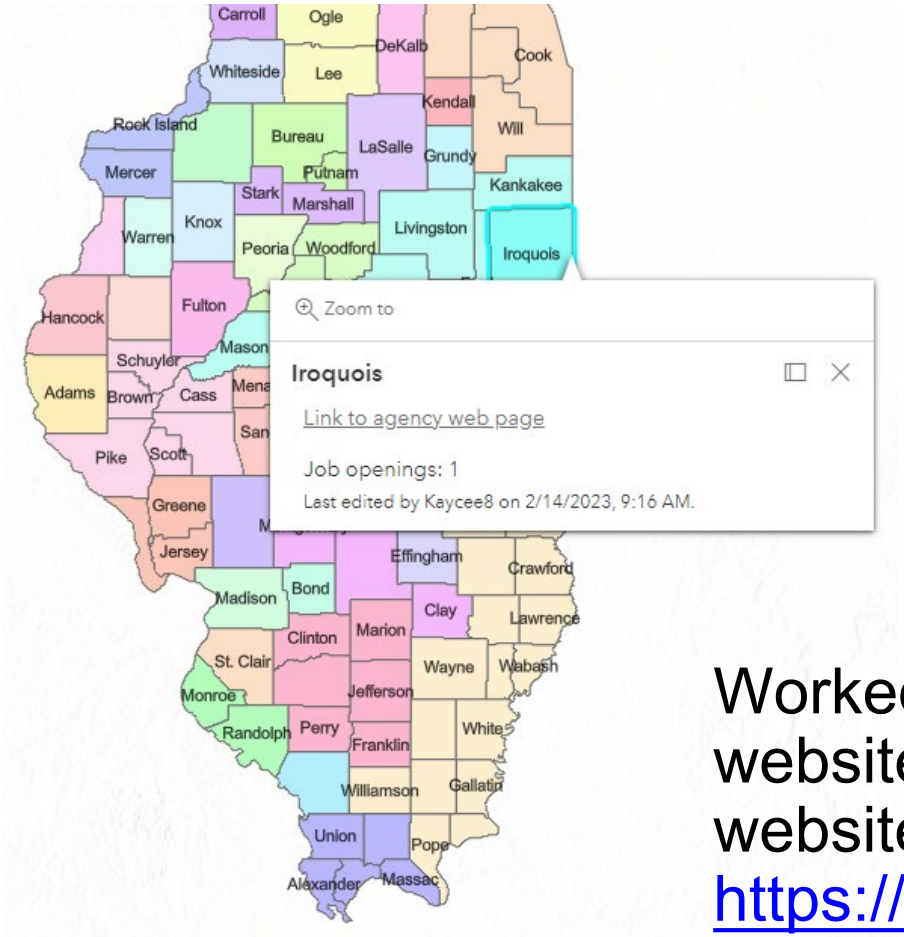
TCRP Bus Operator Workforce Management: Practitioner's Guide, *Prepublication* (2023)

TABLE 1: RECRUITMENT-HIRING-RETENTION PROCESS WORKSHEET FOR AGENCIES

Recruiting		Agency Answer	Notes (potential issues, barriers within process)
PROCESS COMPONENTS	**Advertising:** How do potential applicants hear about a job? List all of the places your agency advertises job postings. These can include print, online, and in-person advertising activities.		
	Partnerships and Referrals: Is there anyone or any organization who helps identify potential applicants? List any partnerships your agency uses to recruit applicants.		
	Application: What does the employment application look like? How do potential employees submit applications? Describe the length, format, and content of an employment application.		
	Requirements: What are the minimum requirements for operation workers? How are they explained to applicants? List the requirements for employment and how or when they are communicated to applicants.		
METRICS	How many potential applicants see or engage with a job posting and/or engage at a recruitment event?		
	How many potential applicants begin an application?		
	How many potential applicants begin an application but do not complete an application?		
	How many applicants complete an application?		
	How many applicants are invited to an interview, accept the interview, and attend the interview?		

[APTA Transit Workforce Shortage Toolkit](#) (2023)

Example from Illinois RTAP



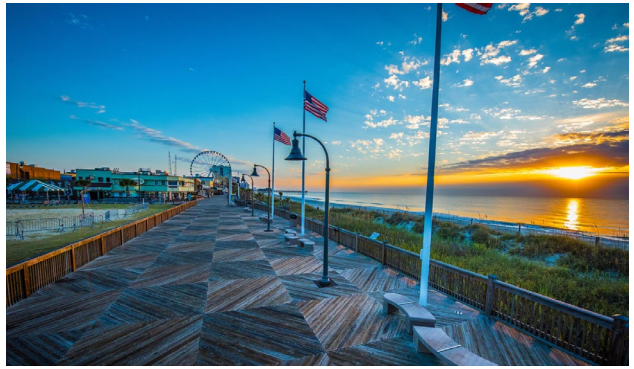


Worked with Western Illinois University's GIS lab on a website with an interactive map showing all rural transit websites in Illinois by county and the job openings: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/062df18e709c4083850eeb22e113ef6b. Putting QR codes on stickers for buses.

Upcoming Virtual Events

- **USDOT Drug & Alcohol Regulation Update Webinar** – June 22, 2:00 PM ET
- **Challenges and Successes with Shared-Use Mobility in Rural, Frontier, and Tribal Areas**, NCHRP Workshop with SUMC & TTI – June 29, 2:00 PM ET
- **#RuralTransitDay Twitter Chat** – July 14, 2:00 PM ET (Rural Transit Day is Sunday July 16)
- **State RTAP Manager Peer Roundtable** – July 18, 2:00 PM ET
- **Learn about TACL:** Transportation Technical Assistance Coordination Library, featuring SUMC's resource on mobility interoperability – August 17, 2:00 PM ET
- **Books in Transit: I was Told It Would Get Easier** – August 22, 2:00 PM ET

5th National RTAP Conference
Navigating the Tides of Change with Rural & Tribal Transit





December 3-6, 2023

Marriott Myrtle Beach Resort & Spa

Hotel booking is open

NationalRtap.org/Conference2023

Registration and agenda coming soon!

Tribal Transit Awards nominations and Student Poster Contest are open.



Thank You!



National RTAP
Rural Transit Assistance Program

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Federal Transit Administration