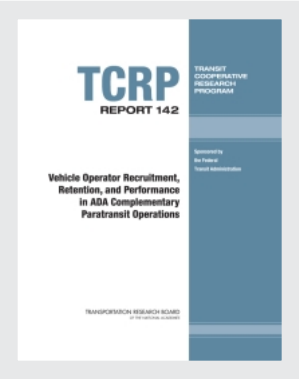

Vehicle Operator Recruitment, Retention, and Performance in ADA Complementary Paratransit Operations

DETAILS

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

TCRP REPORT 142

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TRANSIT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The nation's growth and the need to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives place demands on public transit systems. Current systems, some of which are old and in need of upgrading, must expand service area, increase service frequency, and improve efficiency to serve these demands. Research is necessary to solve operating problems, to adapt appropriate new technologies from other industries, and to introduce innovations into the transit industry. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) serves as one of the principal means by which the transit industry can develop innovative near-term solutions to meet demands placed on it.

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The TCRP provides a forum where transit agencies can cooperatively address common operational problems. The TCRP results support and complement other ongoing transit research and training programs.

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TCRP PROJECT F-13 PANEL
Field of Human Resources

AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research reported herein was performed under TCRP Project F-13 by a team comprised of employees from TranSystems Corp., Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc., McGlothin Davis, Inc., and the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF). TranSystems Corp. was the prime contractor for this study with the other firms participating as subcontractors.

Russell Thatcher of TranSystems Corp. was the Principal Investigator. Others assisting from TranSystems included Thomas Procopio and Caroline Ferris. Will Rodman was the Project Manager for Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc., assisted by David Koffman, Richard Weiner, and Lisa Jacobson. Mary Davis was the Project Manager for McGlothin Davis, Inc., assisted by Clementine Morris. Marilyn Golden was the Project Manager for DREDF.

The research team would also like to acknowledge the many transit agency and paratransit contractor staff who provided information and agreed to serve as case studies.

FOREWORD

By Gwen Chisholm Smith
Staff Officer
Transportation Research Board

TCRP Report 142: Vehicle Operator Recruitment, Retention, and Performance in ADA Complementary Paratransit Operations provides guidance on the relationships that influence and enhance operator recruitment, retention, and performance in ADA complementary paratransit services. This report includes examples of programs, efforts, and industry best practices and provides suggestions and methods for improving operator recruitment, retention, and performance. The information in the report is formulated to help public transit agencies improve productivity, manage costs, and offer passengers improved ADA paratransit service quality. The report covers ADA complementary paratransit services that are contracted out, provided in-house, or operated through a brokerage.

This report will be helpful to public transit agencies and paratransit service providers.

Vehicle operator performance is a critical factor in service quality and efficiency in all types of public transportation services. This is particularly true in ADA complementary paratransit operations where operators provide considerable assistance to riders with a variety of disabilities and must have a good working knowledge of the entire service area in which they are operating. ADA paratransit service quality is dependent on operators understanding individual rider needs and providing appropriate assistance. Operators must be able to interpret and carry out complex shared-ride runs, navigate between pick-up and drop-off locations, competently use appropriate technology, locate correct boarding locations at complex pick-up points, and board/disembark riders safely and efficiently.

Maintaining a qualified and well-trained operator workforce is critical to providing a safe and effective ADA paratransit operation. Paratransit performance can be adversely affected when service providers must constantly recruit and train new operators because of high turnover. Research was needed to identify key factors that affect operator recruitment, retention, and performance in all types of ADA paratransit service delivery. This research would help public transit agencies and paratransit service providers enhance the quality of service for riders and provide more efficient and cost-effective paratransit services.

To assist in the development of *TCRP Report 142,* the research team conducted a survey to identify the factors and issues considered most important to operator recruitment, retention, and performance. The survey participants were from small, medium, and large public transit agencies that administer or operate paratransit services and contractors who operate various paratransit delivery models, such as directly operated services and brokered services. Based on the information gathered from the survey results, the researchers

identified the key factors that impact operator recruitment, retention, and performance. The researchers further explored the interrelationships between the key factors and operator recruitment, retention, and performance.

The report presents several approaches being used to improve recruitment and retention, and the report addresses wage parity between paratransit and fixed route operators.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Vehicle Operator Recruitment, Retention, and Performance in ADA Complementary Paratransit Operations

Vehicle operator performance is an essential element in the delivery of efficient, quality, and Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) complementary paratransit service. Successfully carrying out shared-ride paratransit schedules which is often on a tight schedule in order to meet all rider demands, is a significant challenge. Providing appropriate assistance to riders with diverse needs requires particular skill and training. Meeting and responding to daily operating conditions requires consistent professionalism. A common sentiment expressed by those familiar with the dynamic nature of paratransit operations is that the vehicle operator job in this type of service is at least as challenging and critical as that of fixed-route operators.

Finding and retaining quality ADA paratransit vehicle operators is reported to be a particular problem. Annual surveys of the industry by a leading trade publication have consistently found that operator recruitment and retention is one of the most significant challenges faced by service providers. The national survey conducted as part of this study found that annual turnover of vehicle operators averages 30 percent among private contracted providers and is often much higher. ADA compliance reviews conducted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in recent years have documented vehicle operator turnover rates in excess of 80% per year in some of the nation's largest ADA paratransit programs.

Vehicle operator recruitment and retention issues directly affect the quality and effectiveness of ADA paratransit services that are provided. This study found that only 29% of private companies providing ADA paratransit services under contract to public entities consistently operate with a full complement of vehicle operators. Fifty-five percent experience periodic workforce shortages, and 16% reported constant workforce shortages. Among public entities that operate services in-house, 50% reported a full workforce, while 28% reported periodic shortages of operators, and 16% reported constant shortages. Fifty-two percent of public entities responsible for providing ADA complementary paratransit indicated that vehicle operator availability had a moderate to significant impact on service delivery.

Without an adequate number of vehicle operators, systems can enter the day of service with scheduled runs that are "uncovered." The trips on these runs must then be added to already tight schedules on other runs. Constant turnover also means that a significant portion of the workforce is inexperienced and may not be able to deliver services as efficiently and effectively as more experienced operators. A detailed review of two ADA paratransit programs conducted as part of this study found that on-time performance on runs performed by less experienced operators was 3 to 13 percentage points lower than on runs performed by more experienced operators.

High turnover also can have significant financial consequences. The research found that the full cost of recruiting, hiring, and training each ADA paratransit operator is between $3,200 and $4,200. This suggests that in a system that employs 100 vehicle operators and has a 40% annual turnover rate, recruitment and training costs are likely between $128,000 and

$168,000 per year. Reducing annual turnover to 20% would result in savings in recruitment and training of $64,000 to $84,000 per year. Investing this amount in improved recruitment, training, compensation, performance bonuses, and better tools and support to achieve lowered turnover would therefore make sense financially.

Even more significant cost savings could also be realized from the performance of experienced vehicle operators. As noted above, the research found that vehicle operators with more than 6 months of experience were 8% to 24% more productive than less experienced operators. In a system with 100 operators and 40% annual turnover, it could be expected that 40 operators would have less than 6 months of experience for half the year each year. Reducing annual turnover to 20% would mean that there would be 20 more operators that would be providing service at a higher productivity for half of the year. Assuming an average increase in productivity of 16%, this would mean a savings of 3,200 revenue-hours per year to serve the same number of trips. Assuming an operating cost of $55 per revenue-hour, this could amount to a savings of $176,000 per year.

Savings in recruitment and training is realized directly by the operating entity and should influence business decisions to improve workforce stability. Cost savings related to productivity also would be directly realized by public entities that operate ADA paratransit services in-house and should impact their decisions to create a more stable workforce. In privately contracted operations, though, where providers are paid per revenue-hour of service delivered, the savings due to productivity improvement might not affect their workforce decisions. If they are paid per hour regardless of productivity, and contract incentives and disincentives related to productivity are not significant, they might find it more profitable to provide relatively low levels of compensation and operate with high vehicle operator turnover. It is incumbent on the public entities paying for the services, to which the additional costs would fall (or savings accrue), to ensure that contract operators provide them with stable, experienced, and productive vehicle operators.

A number of factors appear to impact vehicle operator recruitment and retention. The adequacy of compensation appears to be one of the more significant factors. Relatively low compensation, particularly given the high demands of the job, can affect the quality of applicants and trainees. This, in turn, can result in high training drop-out rates and involuntary terminations for poor performance. Relatively low compensation can also contribute to turnover as qualified operators leave for better paying jobs or jobs of equal pay with fewer demands and less stress.

According to national survey responses, the average starting wage in the spring of 2008 for ADA paratransit vehicle operators employed by private contractors ranged from $7 to $14.06 per hour and averaged $10.47. Vehicle operators employed by public agencies that provided services in-house were paid from $9.50 to $15.77, with the average starting wage being $12.06. The research also found that starting wages for ADA paratransit operators are less than for fixed-route operators by an average of about $1 to $2 per hour and the difference in maximum pay for longer term operators is greater.

Fringe benefits for ADA paratransit operators are also often relatively meager, particularly for those employed by private contractors. Only 75% of private contractors offer individual health care coverage to full-time operators, and only 68% provide family coverage. Only 19% of companies offer health benefits to part-time vehicle operators. On average, full-time vehicle operators are required to pay 33% of individual coverage and 50% of family coverage, a cost that is often out-of-reach given the hourly wages.

Detailed analysis conducted as part of this study did show a statistically significant relationship between compensation and turnover. The level of starting wages was shown to account for 21% of the turnover reported. The research also suggested that turnover can be lowered by 3.5% to 5.1% for every $1 increase in starting wage.

While compensation is significant and explains some of the turnover, the research suggests that the other factors also affect turnover. Other factors that appear to be significant are the following:

- **The requirements and demands of the job.** It was found that many applicants and trainees may not have a full appreciation for the nature of the job. Individuals who believe they are applying for a simple driving job may leave once they realize the full requirements and demands of the job.
- **Work shifts and work assignment practices.** This includes evening and weekend work and part-time shifts and split shifts that may not fit employee lifestyles. With 81% of paratransit providers assigning work based on seniority, constant high turnover was noted among operators with the least seniority who received the least desirable assignments.
- **Job frustrations and limited support.** Vehicle operators who participated in focus group discussions conducted as part of the study noted frustration with the schedules they sometimes were required to perform. Difficult schedules, particularly if combined with limited dispatch or company support, can lead to job dissatisfaction and turnover.

The research suggests that greater attention must be given to the following three areas in order to address vehicle operator recruitment and retention:

- Attracting and finding the right individuals for the job,
- Providing adequate training and the necessary tools to do the job effectively, and
- Providing a supportive and responsive work environment.

Specific actions and efforts that can assist in each of these areas have been identified and are outlined in this report. Examples of successful approaches and efforts reported by transit agencies and service providers are described. A model that describes the many factors that contribute to recruitment and retention is presented and explained. The more promising efforts and approaches include the following:

- Targeted recruitment that focuses on finding the right person for the job and training them to be vehicle operators rather than relying on applicants with driving experience who may not be good fits for the job;
- Recruitment that defines the characteristics required to succeed as an ADA paratransit vehicle operator and then seeks to identify and attract these individuals to the job;
- Careful pre-screening of applicants to ensure that they have the necessary skills and attitude to succeed in the job;
- Realistic job previews that give applicants a better sense of the nature of the job;
- Improved compensation to be able to attract qualified applicants and keep quality operators;
- "Onboarding" and mentoring to provide support and guidance to new operators;
- Referral and signing bonuses to assist in recruitment;
- Bonuses to encourage and recognize good performance and supplement base levels of compensation;
- Other efforts to recognize the contributions of vehicle operators; and
- Greater dispatch, supervisor, and management support and a "team" approach to meeting the challenges of ADA paratransit service delivery.

The research noted a number of public transit agencies that have developed integrated workforces and equalized pay for fixed-route and ADA paratransit operators. A number of systems that are moving in this direction as a way to address workforce issues were also

identified. The experiences reported by these systems suggest that workforce integration and pay equity can improve job satisfaction, retention, and performance. The increased costs were, in many cases, offset by gains in service productivity, lowered recruitment and training costs, and greater workforce flexibility.

The research also identified transit agencies that are employing innovative procurement and contracting approaches to address vehicle operator issues. These include the following:

- Clearly indicating the importance of vehicle operator recruitment and retention to prospective proposers and the transit agency's desire to be provided with a stable and experienced workforce;
- Requirements in procurement documents for the provision of reasonable or living wages or for maintaining and building on the current levels of compensation;
- Requirements for reasonable fringe benefits;
- Preferences in the selection process to proposers who demonstrate compensation levels and other efforts that will achieve a stable, experienced workforce;
- Specific penalties if contractors are unable to pull-out assigned runs due to operator shortages; and
- Other service performance requirements, with associated incentives and penalties, that directly relate to the need for an adequate workforce.

Finally, this report notes the need for further research. In particular, more research is needed to understand and quantify the impacts of the many factors and components of recruitment and retention. Starting wages have been shown to account for about 21% of turnover. More research on the exact impacts of fringe benefits, work assignments, and other factors is needed to better define the other 79%. Additional study and documentation of the inter-relationships between recruitment and training costs, compensation, turnover, performance, and total system cost are also needed to allow systems to make decisions about the appropriate levels of investment in the workforce.

While this study has begun to document the extent of the problem and has identified possible solutions, more research is also needed to identify proven practices and approaches. This includes continued study of the integration of fixed-route and ADA paratransit workforces and efforts to develop pay equity. It also includes additional study of best practices in public transit procurement that encourages and supports contractor efforts to develop a stable and experienced workforce.

CHAPTER 1

Background

Study Issues, Goals, and Methodology

Aside from having the financial resources necessary to meet service demand, one of the greatest challenges facing providers of American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) complementary paratransit service is maintaining an experienced and stable workforce—particularly vehicle operators. Consider the following hypothetical scenarios, meant to illustrate some of the commonly reported issues.

The Manager of a paratransit service provider called a meeting with her senior management team to discuss the ongoing problem of vehicle operator availability. "It seems that no matter what we do, we are always short on operators," she said. "Let's go over what we are doing here and come up with some solutions."

"We have ongoing ads in all the papers and signs on vehicles, and we still can't get enough applicants," noted the HR Manager. "And then, if we get applicants, we are having difficulty getting them to pass all of the background, driving, and drug testing requirements that the transit agency requires."

"I have 10 people in training right now," the Lead Trainer reported. "But based on past experience, we'll be lucky if five stick with it and complete the training."

"I will probably have five new vacancies in the next month," said the Operations Manager. "We still have rapid turnover with about half of the workforce—those with the least seniority. If we can't get applicants and get them through training faster than that, we won't gain at all on the number of operators we need. And the service is growing, so our operator needs are likely to increase faster than we are bringing on new people."

"Well let's think of some more things we can do," the Manager requested. "We can't keep operating this way. It's starting to affect our ability to provide the capacity required and service quality."

Across the City, in the public transit offices, the transit agency's Paratransit Manager was meeting with the Contract Administrator to discuss the same issue.

"On-time performance dropped from 95% to 90% last year and riders are saying that routing has gotten worse," he noted. "We got the budget increase we needed this year and we have added the vehicles that the contractor wanted, so what else do we need to do to get performance to meet standards again?"

"The main thing we are finding," said a Contract Administrator, "is that the contractor is reporting very high operator turnover—50% last year—and doesn't have enough operators to cover all of the scheduled runs. They use whatever extraboard operators they have to cover scheduled absences but don't have enough operators to cover same-day call-outs. A lot of trips end up being put back on the unscheduled list each morning when they can't pull all of the runs out. We also noted that they often end up closing out runs the evening before if they don't have enough operators scheduled for the next day. This has made the scheduling very tight, and there are a lot of add-ons on the day of service. I think the add-ons are leading to longer on-board times and routing that takes riders out-of-the-way."

"In the next RFP that we put out next year, we are going to have to try and address this issue," said the Paratransit Manager. "We added incentives and liquidated damages last time, and we have been using those, but we may need to do more. And even though we really stressed in the last RFP the need to provide a stable workforce, it didn't end up changing the operator compensation very much. The winning bidder had wages and compensation that were not a lot higher than the last contractor. How can we get bidders to address this issue better?"

And back at the garage, a new vehicle operator was just pulling out to start her run. It was a 6-hour afternoon run. She worked weekends and a few weekday afternoons but was still only getting 35 hours a week. The best shifts had already been picked by the time it was her turn to select runs. The last few afternoons of work had been tough. She was in a part of town that she didn't know very well, and the traffic had been bad. The schedules seemed to be very tight, and the dispatchers were so busy that she wasn't always comfortable asking them for assistance. She ended up running almost an hour late by the end of each day and didn't feel that her performance was good. Riders were also rightfully frustrated with the service, which made it even more stressful. "I know that over time I will get more knowledgeable about the area and each rider," she thought, "but right now, this is really hard. I really don't know if I can stick this out. The city is looking for school bus operators," she recalled. "That has got to be easier, and they pay just as much."

Similar meetings, conversations, and situations seem to occur frequently across the country. Recent studies of ADA paratransit services and compliance reviews conducted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have identified vehicle

operator recruitment and retention as one of the common challenges in systems experiencing service quality problems. Developing a better understanding of vehicle operator recruitment and retention issues and identifying proven, workable solutions could have a significant impact on paratransit service quality across the country.

The goal of this research was to:

> Provide information and guidance that will assist transit agencies and paratransit operators in improving the quality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of ADA paratransit services by improving vehicle operator recruitment, retention, and performance.

The specific objectives of the research were to do the following:

- Identify the key factors that affect the recruitment of qualified vehicle operators.
- Identify the factors that affect vehicle operator turnover and factors that can assist in improving operator retention, job satisfaction, and ultimately operator performance.
- Determine how actions and decisions at all program stages—system design, system policies, contractor procurement, and daily operations—affect vehicle operator recruitment, retention, and performance.
- Determine the inter-relationships between factors.
- Develop practical and useful outcome information that will better link decisions made in system design and operation to operator performance, service quality, and efficiency.
- Develop an understanding of the factors, relationships, and outcomes in various settings (small, medium, and large systems) as well as in various service designs (in-house, contracted, brokered, union/non-union, etc.).
- Produce guidance that will assist small, medium, and large systems to better understand the factors and relationships that influence operator recruitment, retention, and performance.
- Provide effective and proven examples of programs, actions, and industry best practices that can improve operator recruitment, retention, and performance.

Since labor issues are different for different types of paratransit services (e.g., taxis, human services transportation, ADA paratransit, etc.), the research focused specifically on ADA complementary paratransit services provided by public transit agencies. It did, however, address all types of ADA paratransit service designs, including contracted services, in-house services, and brokered services.

Also, given the extensive scope of this issue, the research was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved the identification of factors that affect operator recruitment and retention. This was done through a literature search, focus groups, a national survey, and input from an expert panel. A model that identifies, diagrams, and illustrates the various factors and issues associated with paratransit operator recruitment, retention, and performance was then prepared. The model also describes the relationships and interactions between factors.

The second phase then focused on specific factors and relationships felt to be most significant and developed data that will begin to "fill in" the overall model. For example, detailed research was conducted to identify the following:

- The impacts of various levels of pay and other compensation on vehicle operator turnover,
- The impacts of tenure and work experience on productivity and service quality
- Experiences with integration of fixed-route and paratransit workforces and efforts to equalize pay,
- Innovative approaches to procurement of ADA paratransit services that are designed to increase workforce stability,
- The cost of recruitment and training, and
- Innovative recruitment practices and efforts to reduce turnover.

A better understanding of the factors and inter-relationships that affect vehicle operator recruitment and retention will help public transit agencies and service providers establish more appropriate wage and benefit structures, attract and retain qualified and experienced operators, and provide more efficient and cost-effective services. Public transit agencies will use this information when designing appropriate service procurement requirements and in reviewing and selecting proposals. This, in turn, will enable riders to receive quality service and public transit agencies to provide this service in the most cost-effective way.

Organization of the Report

Chapters 2 through 5 of the report describe research efforts to identify the factors that affect vehicle operator recruitment, retention, and performance. Chapter 2 presents the findings of the literature search as well as findings from focus group meetings of vehicle operators, supervisors, and ADA paratransit managers. Chapter 3 presents the findings of the industry survey. A model that depicts the key factors identified is then presented in Chapter 4. Some key inter-relationships between factors are also detailed.

Chapters 5 through 7 then present research aimed at providing information for the model and inter-relationships proposed. An analysis of the impacts of various levels of compensation on vehicle operator turnover is summarized in Chapter 5. The impacts of training wages, starting wages, maximum wages, and several types of fringe benefits on reported vehicle operator turnover are explored using regression analysis. The relationship between vehicle operator tenure and per-

formance is explored in Chapter 6. The analysis looks at productivity, on-time performance, and complaint rates for groups of vehicle operators with various levels of job tenure. The full cost of turnover is discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8 presents information collected throughout the study on recruitment and retention practices reported to be successful. Information used to identify job applicants who are likely to be successful vehicle operators is presented. Examples of recruitment, pre-screening, and training approaches are also provided. Techniques for improving retention, such as recognition and performance bonuses; technologies to assist vehicle operators with performance of the job; and supportive work environments are also included.

Chapter 9 then explores the potential benefits of fixed-route and paratransit workforce integration and vehicle operator wage parity. The experiences of several selected systems that have achieved wage parity or are working toward it are presented.

Finally, Chapter 10 describes efforts by several public transit systems to develop more stable ADA paratransit vehicle operator workforces through innovative procurement or contracting. Examples of ways to address workforce stability in the procurement process are detailed. Contract requirements and associated incentives and disincentives meant to impact workforce stability are described in several case studies. Chapter 11 discusses future research needs.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Vehicle Operator Recruitment and Retention Issues

Literature Review

The first task of the study was to conduct a search of the literature related to vehicle operator recruitment, retention, and performance. The review encompassed paratransit-specific literature searches as well as a review of literature in vehicle operations, in public transit in general, and in the school bus and trucking sectors. Literature reviews in the limousine and taxi sectors were also conducted. While the review revealed a limited number of paratransit-specific studies, it did provide considerable information relevant to the focus of the current study. In addition to transportation industry literature, the review includes findings on how issues of employee recruitment, retention, and performance are being addressed within today's marketplace in general.

The first part of the literature review focuses on factors that affect the industry's ability to maintain an experienced and stable workforce of paratransit operators. Quite a number of writings focus on internal factors related to these issues. External factors within the general work environment have also received significant attention. In some cases, the factors of recruitment, retention, and performance have been addressed singularly and other times the focus has been on the synergistic effect of these factors in maintaining a sufficient quantity of qualified paratransit operators.

A list of references cited is provided at the end of this report. Throughout this chapter, the terms "vehicle operators" and "drivers" are sometimes used interchangeably since they were both used in the cited reports and articles.

An Overview of Paratransit Vehicle Operator Issues

Writings from a variety of sources speak to the current research topic: challenges facing providers of ADA complementary paratransit service in maintaining an experienced and stable workforce—particularly vehicle operators. One source is a white paper prepared by the New York Public Transit Association, Inc., (NYPTA), a not-for-profit association representing the public transit industry throughout the state. The paper, entitled *Key Issues and Concerns Facing New York State's Transit Industry,* discussed one step several New York transit agencies have taken to cut costs and improve operational efficiencies: analyzing and addressing high operator-related costs, including steps to improve operator retention rates, create performance objectives, reduce absenteeism rates, and reduce overtime costs (*1*).

Surveys conducted by METRO Magazine for several years highlight challenges related to maintaining a sufficient number of qualified paratransit operators. The publication's 2005 Paratransit Survey of 40 paratransit operators of varying sizes in the United States and Canada found respondents cited the recruitment and retention of operators as the most challenging operator-related concern. The 2006 survey of 36 randomly-selected paratransit providers in the United States and Canada again found that recruitment and retention of vehicle operators remained the chief operator-related issue plaguing providers. Likewise, in the 2007 survey, 70% of reporting organizations stated that operator recruitment and retention remained the "biggest operator-related" concern (*2, 3, 4*).

In the 2005 National Council on Disability study report, *The Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United State*s, a comparison between fixed-route and paratransit vehicle operators revealed that pay differences between the two groups have an impact on vehicle operator retention. As a general rule, pay and benefits for fixed-route bus operators are noted to be higher than for paratransit operators. The rationale often given for this pay discrepancy is that the fixed-route operator's job is more difficult. The study found, however, that the salary differential is not necessarily based on any objective comparison of the two jobs, but rather, historic roots (*5*).

The 2000 TRB report entitled *State of the Art Paratransit* noted that strategies adopted by transit agencies to reduce

labor costs have inadvertently, negatively impacted the ability of agencies to recruit and retain qualified paratransit operators. In the case of in-house paratransit operations, one strategy identified is the practice of implementing labor agreements with two wage scales—the usual fixed-route transit wage and a lower wage for paratransit operators. Another strategy for labor cost reduction is for transit agencies to contract for service with providers that typically pay lower wages, a practice that has unintentionally resulted in difficulties recruiting and retaining quality operators in both transit agency-run systems and contracted systems (*6*).

State of the Art Paratransit also points out that paratransit operators driving larger vehicles must possess a commercial driver's license, which places paratransit companies in competition with trucking and delivery companies that pay higher wages. The report states that the difficulty in hiring, training, and retaining qualified paratransit vehicle operators will continue until the industry finds a way to compensate quality operators (*6*).

TCRP Report 124: Guidebook for Measuring, Assessing, and Improving Performance of Demand-Responsive Transportation (2008) notes that wages and benefits for demand-responsive transportation (DRT) vehicle operators has become a key issue in recent years, particularly in systems where service provision is competitively procured (*7*). It indicates turnover rates of up to 50% and notes that shortages of operators and high turnover can impact DRT operations in several ways. Impacts cited include systems being unable to cover scheduled runs, high costs for ongoing recruitment and training, and the use of more inexperienced operators. The report states that "It is generally recognized that experienced DRT operators—who are familiar with the service area, understand their riders' trip patterns, are knowledgeable about the system's policies and procedures, and competent with in-vehicle technology—can contribute to improved performance, particularly productivity and service quality, such as on-time performance."

TRB Special Report 275: The Workforce Challenge: Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Qualified Workers for Transportation and Transit Agencies lists the following factors as limitations in the ability of transit agencies to recruit and retain new operators:

- The equipment used on transit buses and paratransit vehicles to accommodate people with disabilities, as well as the equipment used for various other operations like fare processing, automatic vehicle detecting, etc., are complicated and require extensive knowledge and training.
- Most agencies cannot offer flexible work schedules to new operators.
- New hires often have to work split-shifts.
- Operators are held to very high standards of efficiency and public safety.
- Often operators are part of collective bargaining units.
- Operators must have special licensing.
- Opportunities for advancement are scarce (*8*).

FTA ADA Paratransit Compliance Reviews

Recent compliance reviews of ADA paratransit services conducted by FTA have also documented issues with operator availability and turnover. A review of final reports posted on FTA's website identified recent service issues in the following systems:

- A review conducted of the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) in San Diego, California, in February 2008 indicated an 82% annual turnover rate among ADA paratransit vehicle operators (*9*). The report states that "This high turnover rate results in a high percentage of relatively inexperienced operators and may affect service efficiency and service quality."
- A review of Pierce Transit in Lakewood, Washington, in November 2007 indicated that the major private contractor, which provided about 74% of the service, was experiencing an 80% turnover rate among operators. Interestingly, Pierce Transit, which provides about a quarter of the service in-house, reported almost no vehicle operator turnover (no departures in 2007 and only a few operators retiring or leaving each year). A review of the in-house operator roster showed an average tenure of 14 years; the most inexperienced operator had 4 years of experience, and the senior operator had 26 years of experience (*10*).
- A review of the Central Ohio Transit Authority in Columbus, Ohio, in February 2007 showed more moderate turnover. Records of the private contractor which provides service in Columbus showed annual post-training turnover of about 25% (*11*).
- A review of the City of Albuquerque Transit Department in Albuquerque, NM, conducted in September 2005 indicated only about a 10% annual turnover of ADA paratransit vehicle operators. The ADA paratransit service in Albuquerque is provided in-house with city employees (*12*).
- A review of the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads (Hampton Roads Transit) in Hampton, VA, in October 2002 indicated an annual turnover of about 30%. The ADA paratransit service in Hampton was provided by private contractors (*13*).
- A review of the City of Tucson Transit Services Division in Tucson, AZ, in March 2003 indicated an annual turnover of about 44%. This included only 9% turnover among the private contractor's 65 full-time vehicle operators but 93% turnover among the 45 part-time operators (*14*).
- A review of the Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority in Birmingham, AL, in April 2002 noted that

19 of the private contractor's 26 vehicle operators had less than 1 year of experience and 15 had 6 months or less time on the job (*15*). The report noted that contractor staff "indicated that operator turnover had been a significant issue until just recently when changes in hiring practices and compensation for paratransit operators were negotiated with the union. Prior to January 2002, hiring for all operators, both fixed route and paratransit, was combined. Paratransit operators were paid between $6.00 and $8.00 per hour and fixed-route operators were paid between $8.82 and $14.70 per hour. New fixed-route operator positions were offered first to existing personnel and virtually all new fixed-route operators transferred from paratransit. Essentially, all new hires were assigned to paratransit service and many operators then quickly transferred to fixed-route service as openings became available. This resulted in very high paratransit operator turnover. The fixed-route seniority records between July 1 and December 31, 2001 indicated that a total of 23 operators had moved from VIP (paratransit) service to the fixed-route service during this 6-month period. This suggests a paratransit operator turnover rate of about 88% per year. A new paratransit operator contract was negotiated with the union effective January 2002. Under the new contract, operators are hired separately for the paratransit and fixed-route programs. Paratransit operator pay was also increased to range from $9.00 to $12.00 per hour. Records from January through March 2002 indicate that these changes appear to be lowering paratransit operator turnover. During this 3-month period, only five new paratransit operators were hired and trained, which suggests a turnover rate of 58% per year."

- A review of the Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority in Tulsa, OK, in March 2002 reported an annual turnover rate of about 50% per year. Low pay was $8.00 per hour at that time and was believed by the private contractor to be a major reason for the turnover (*16*).
- A review of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority in Atlanta, GA, in September 2001 noted that "there are typically vacant ADA Complementary Paratransit operator positions even though MARTA is constantly hiring and training new operators" (*17*). The annual turnover for this publicly-operated service was reported to be 46% a year. The report attributes much of the turnover to "ADA Complementary Paratransit operators moving into fixed-route positions that become available . . . ADA Complementary Paratransit operators receive $8.40 to $12.30 per hour and fixed-route operators receive $13.43 to $17.00 per hour."
- A review of the Milwaukee County Transit System in Milwaukee, WI, in July 2001 reported turnover rates for the two private contractors that operated the service. One contractor was reported to have about 30% turnover per year among paratransit operators. The second was reported to have a turnover of 88% (*18*).
- A review of the Connecticut Department of Transportation/Greater Hartford Transit District in Hartford, CT, in June 2001 indicated about 7% to 17% annual turnover among ADA paratransit vehicle operators. The report notes that the private contractor cited fair compensation that included $10 to $12.50 per hour plus a 401(K) program, medical insurance, and holiday and vacation pay as factors that kept turnover low (*19*).

Demographic Factors Affecting Availability of Qualified Workers

The New York Public Transit Association *Key Issues and Concerns* white paper points out that the aging of the large baby boom generation has major implications for changing consumer demands for housing, goods, and services, including transportation. In addition to automobile travel, the impact on transportation systems will likely include greater demand for paratransit services (*1*).

Other publications discuss the size and speed with which the baby boom generation is moving toward retirement. Some estimate that the number of federal workers at retirement age or eligible to retire in the next few years is as high as 53%. One recent study by the Rockefeller Institute of Government found that 42% of the 15.7 million state and local government employees are between 45 and 64 years old. Calling it the most "significant talent and brain drain ever experienced by government," the Institute estimates that a full 40% of state and local government employees will be eligible to retire in the next 15 years (*20*).

One federal lawmaker calls the work force problem "a crisis in human capital" and states that a compromised transportation work force would have serious repercussions for the U.S. economy. The demand for transportation continues to increase dramatically as the U.S. population has increased rapidly, and vehicle-miles traveled are increasing twice as fast as the population. If the workforce problem were confined to federal quarters, transportation policy-makers and managers could breathe a little easier, but it is not. The problem extends to the state and local transportation workforces as well. The competition for qualified workers will be fierce, as almost every sector of business, industry, and government grapples with the same problem. Although the challenge is not unique to transportation, the field does have its own set of complicating circumstances because the nation's businesses and citizens are so dependent on the transportation system (*20*).

The effects of the aging baby boom generation will manifest themselves in other ways, as well. Though a significant portion of baby boomers will retire, others will choose to remain in the workforce as "mature workers."

In *Challenges in Staffing,* Furchtgott-Roth hypothesizes that changing demographics, workforce readiness, and global competition will continue to create staffing obstacles and opportunities for organizations. The aging of the workforce is one of the major issues the author identifies as potentially problematic. The proportion of Americans over age 55 will increase significantly along with increases in longevity, thus increasing the proportion of older Americans. The labor force participation of older Americans is increasing with older employees working full-time weekly schedules (*21*). Indeed, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), as cited by Burkert in his 2006 study, by 2012 the availability of older workers will increase by 56% (*22*).

Research by the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), the international human resources trade organization, also cites the aging of the workforce as one of the three key trends that are shaping organizations today. Projected labor shortages and baby boomers continuing to work beyond the retirement age are other key factors. It is projected that approximately 20% of the workforce will be 55 years or older by 2010. Research reveals that traditional retirement has become the exception and not the rule. Additionally, the BLS, as referenced by Burkert in 2006, predicts that by 2012, the labor force will decline in younger age groups, while the availability of older workers will increase dramatically; this indicates that companies must attract older workers to stay adequately staffed (*22*).

Mature workers can play a key role in transferring organizational knowledge and essential skills to less experienced employees. Organizations can leverage this knowledge by promoting internal knowledge transfer and intergenerational learning. Failure to understand generational differences and align workplace policies to generational needs can negatively impact retention and productivity. Research by SHRM led authors to hypothesize that relationship fit is the primary need driving the level of job satisfaction of mature workers. Organizations that want to stay competitive must adapt their talent management practices in line with the shifting demographics of today's labor pool (*23*).

To retain mature workers, employers must offer work arrangements and benefits that align with the needs of this labor pool. Incentives to retain mature workers include flexible work arrangements (e.g., telecommuting, compressed work weeks), training to upgrade skills, time off for volunteerism, phased retirement, reduced shift work mentoring arrangements, and consulting positions. These workers have substantial experience that can be used with the aid of part-time, comp-time, and telecommuting policies. A study conducted by Ernst & Young found that hiring retirees as contractors or having an on-call pool of retirees had the highest impact on the retention of mature workers (*23*).

Burkert hypothesized that mature workers enter or return to the workforce seeking more than just wages, stability or steady hours. Any job that asks for more than they are willing to give in time will probably not be kept (*22*).

Staffing is expected to increase in sectors that cater to the older generation. Furchtgott-Roth suggests that to meet the challenges of the next decade, organizations need to expand the flexibility of labor markets: make the workforce more attractive to senior citizens by allowing employers to offer part-time work without tax penalties and fixed costs; increase the mobility of the workforce by providing defined contribution benefit plans. These tactics help pension portability for employees who can take plans with them and ease the financial burden of company-sponsored pensions (*21*).

Still, younger employees can also make up an important piece of transit staffing. In *Business Insurance* magazine, Fletcher reports that "experts consider helping [young] workers balance the demands of work and life vital to recruiting and retaining young employees" (*24*). According to Fletcher, Deloitte and Touche USA L.L.P. found that members of the younger workforce share the following workforce characteristics:

- Value empowerment/excitement and are idealistic,
- Are more loyal to one employer than Generation X, if they can have multiple experiences there,
- Value open social networks that embrace honest communication, and
- See technology as a way of life (*24*).

Also of note is the increasingly large role immigrants are playing in the transportation industry. In his study *The Changing Face of Taxi and Limousine Drivers,* Schaller compiled statistics provided by the U.S. Census Bureau for the past four census periods. Schaller found that, in the year 2000, 38% of U.S. taxi and limo drivers were immigrants, up from 8% in 1970 and 27% in 1990. Schaller calls this "one of the highest proportions of immigrant workers of any occupation in the U.S." (*25*).

Impact of Management Characteristics and Practices

TCRP Synthesis 71: Paratransit Manager's Skills, Qualifications, and Needs, focuses on the characteristics of successful paratransit managers. In a survey of paratransit managers throughout the nation, respondents noted that a strong team of operators and dispatchers is the backbone of paratransit operations. Respondents cited the importance of managers to know and develop their staffs and to maintain a supportive employment culture. According to these paratransit professionals, attention to these factors will allow the managers to spend less time on managing staff and hiring and training replacements. Good communication and delivering good

and bad news early and honestly to all affected constituents was seen as essential for any person in the paratransit manager role (*26*).

In *60 Ways to Improve Driver Recruitment and Retention,* Burkert discusses the importance of good management characteristics and notes that vehicle operator surveys indicate that poor relationships, especially with management, account for a significant part of turnover. According to Burkert, every supervisor should be trained in human relations skills. Additionally, Burkert notes that the responsibility for managing and cultivating a company relationship with operators often falls to the line supervisor, dispatcher, or operations manager and that no amount of programming, new ideas, pay raises, or incentive plans can overcome a bad dispatcher. Management support and positive feedback is consistently cited as integral to productive workforce relations (*22*).

Shortage of Vehicle Operators in Other Sectors: Fixed-Route Transit, School Bus, and Trucking

Fixed-Route Transit

Research reported in the 2002 *TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium* found that operator positions are the most difficult positions in which to maintain employees. While the reasons for this difficulty vary, many agencies indicated that not being able to offer competitive wages caused difficulties in recruiting and retaining employees (*27*). As previously noted, many transit agencies must compete for employees with commercial enterprises that offer higher wages.

A recent article in *Mass Transit* magazine highlights the impact of the vehicle operator shortage on one city, which is symbolic of a nationwide problem. Amarillo, Texas' city bus system runs fixed routes as well as other transportation services, including transporting school children to and from school and to extracurricular activities. Due to the shortage of vehicle operators, school district supervisors and technicians have had to drive routes; transit employees have had to work numerous overtime shifts (causing exhaustion and ill health); and routes have been cancelled. Amarillo is using a multi-pronged approach to recruit and retain its operator workforce—recruit in locations that will allow more people to know about the job, hire retirees, and provide city benefits to all operators, including the additional benefit of being a member of the Texas Teacher Retirement System (*28*).

In Fargo, North Dakota, city officials who were worried about a bus operator shortage that was causing missed routes requested that the company under contract to provide fixed-route and paratransit service to residents of Fargo increase starting wages for all operators. At the time of the request, local unemployment rates were low, as was the starting wage of bus operators, $7.00 per hour, as compared to other industries (*29*).

School Bus

Fairfax and Prince William Counties, in Virginia, also have experience in dealing with severe bus operator shortages. In 2006, those counties were short about 180 school bus operators, causing students to miss the start of their morning classes. Though the districts were offering up to $15 per hour for starting operator positions, many potential applicants were turned off by the perceived pressures of the job, such as the stress of daily driving and dealing with children. In response, the district offered operators $1,000 bonuses for recruiting other operators, and new operators who stayed at least 90 days received a $500 bonus. Additionally, Fairfax County began offering benefits to operators who worked only 20 hours per week (*30*).

Literature on issues related to the recruitment and retention of school bus operators shows some similarities to the issues faced by those providing complementary paratransit services. One study that involved interviews with a random sample of 50 transportation officials from public schools in Indiana revealed a widespread shortage of qualified bus operators in that state. Between 51% and 77% of all Indiana public school transportation corporations experienced shortages of bus operators in the year prior to the study. Greater than 75% responded that the shortages were caused by the part-time nature of operator jobs. A variety of other reasons were cited as the causes for shortages of bus operators—qualified operators are also qualified for other work that pays more per hour, and operators do not want the responsibility of driving or dealing with children (*30*).

Similarly, a 2001 study of South Carolina school bus operator turnover revealed that the turnover rates in local school districts was 27%. Several factors contributed to high turnover: low pay rates, unavailability of fringe benefits, lack of full-time employment, and equipment and student behavior problems (*31*). The study concluded that school bus operators in that state were underpaid, especially for safety-related positions, leading to high turnover and a limited applicant pool. The Council suggested a bus operator pay increase of 13% to 45% (*31*).

Trucking Industry

Several publications highlight operator shortage and retention as the most serious problem in the trucking industry, with no long-term strategy in place for solving the problem. An October 2005 article by Swain cited turnover rates of 100% or more, resulting in a continuous scramble to recruit

and re-train new operators. Swain hypothesized that operator recruitment is not the issue; the issue is one of retention. The alleged "proven fact" is that operators leave companies because they perceive a lack of communication and believe that they are not respected or valued. Operators complain that companies do not treat them well (*33*).

In addition to fair treatment, vehicle operators want to know what is expected of them, whom they work for, how they are doing, how to resolve problems, and what is going on in the company that will affect them (*33*).

A report by the Gallup organization, commissioned by the American Trucking Association Foundation, included interviews with 801 truck operators to determine activities that most influence operator satisfaction. Operators identified a number of factors: support from the company when on the road, friendliness of managers, company expectations around schedules, fairness of the managers, amount of physical loading and unloading, amount of general non-driving work, schedule, and most especially, time away from home (*32*).

In another study of truck operator retention, which involved an extensive literature review on operator turnover, brainstorming sessions with truck operators, and a review of operator exit interviews, researchers reported that dispatcher responsiveness has a greater impact on operator retention than was originally realized (*33*).

Successful Approaches to Recruiting and Retaining Transit Vehicle Operators

Literature related to recruiting and retaining transit vehicle operators has increased quite a bit in the past decade. Some writings provide paratransit-specific information. For instance, recommendations resulting from the 2005 National Council on Disability research study, *The Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United State*s, include

- Equalize salaries and benefits of fixed-route and paratransit operators, with the rationale that research has documented that such action can reduce chronic paratransit problems such as high turnover and difficulties in maintaining a stable, skilled force of operators.
- Consider training operators on both service modes and rotate operators between fixed-route and paratransit service.
- Undertake studies to determine the impact of the discrepancy in employee wages and benefits between fixed-route operators and paratransit operators on service quality and other factors (*5*).

In *TCRP Synthesis 40,* the authors cite a number of innovative recruiting methods for securing bus operator applicants. Well-planned and highly targeted graphically appealing advertising and outreach programs can be successful in this regard. Some agencies award bonuses to employees who recruit new bus operators. Others display promotional buses at major public and sporting events and have bus operators available to talk to prospective operators. Other tactics, which apply to all organizations and most job categories, include providing website access for potential recruits; focusing on inside sources, current or former employees, and internal job postings; and seeking recruits through schools and fraternal, religious, and community organizations. The report also emphasizes the importance of a realistic job preview as a factor in attracting applicants and retaining new hires (*34*).

TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium cited a number of best practices in this regard. For example, Pierce Transit gives each new bus operator applicant a handout that describes typical scenarios in the work life of a vehicle operator. This practice seems to cut down on the number of dropouts during the new employee orientation period (*27*).

TCRP Report 77 also identified one successful strategy for recruiting operators that included interviewing, administering drug tests, and signing up new employees in one day. Another approach is to partner with community colleges and offer classes on-site as a recruitment and retention incentive. According to the transit systems highlighted in the report, internal and external partnering appears to lead to higher retention rates. Partnering approaches include working with outside organizations; partnering new employees with seasoned operators (mentor programs); and partnering among different departments within an organization in ways that lead to information sharing in the community and among employees (*27*).

TRB Special Report 275 recommends more partnering between community organizations like high schools and community colleges—potential sources of applicants. It further suggests making human resources a priority in transit agencies. The report also stresses the importance of high-quality training. Although Congress allows 0.5% of funding to transit agencies to be used for training, most agencies do not use any of it. According to the authors of the report, successful transit organizations spend 2% of their payroll on training (*8*).

TCRP Synthesis Report 52: Transit Operator Health and Wellness Programs found that quite a number of transit agencies embrace the health and wellness of operators as a critical employee development and retention issue. Six case studies of transit agencies in this report highlight various approaches for retaining a healthy operator workforce through comprehensive health and wellness programs (*35*).

Literature from abroad provides a view of similarities between successful recruitment and retention practices in the United States and the United Kingdom. Best practices used in the United Kingdom are a comprehensive induction (orientation) period including focused training, support

from mentors, and regular performance reviews, all of which have been found to reduce turnover of new hires. In addition, increased pay and benchmarking pay rates against other driving jobs reduce costs in the long run by reducing training and managing of new hires (*36*).

First Group, an international transportation firm based in the United Kingdom, has worked to increase retention of transit operators with the implementation of a mentoring and coaching element as part of its retention strategy. The company experienced a reduction in turnover of 9% over a 2-year period. Under this scenario, each new operator is assigned a "buddy" to mentor and coach them informally in the first two weeks on the job. Operators are then given an Assessor who coaches and assesses them for approximately 6 months and until they achieve a designated level of competency as an operator (*36*).

Similar retention approaches have been in place at a number of U.S. transit agencies for some time. The following two examples are cited in *TCRP Report 77:*

- At Citifare in Reno, Nevada, mentors are selected from among veteran operators who have good records and show potential for teaching others what they know. Through an extended mentor training program, potential mentors develop skills in how to support new operators in each aspect of their jobs.
- At Duluth Transit Authority in Duluth, Minnesota, the mentoring program, in which each new employee is assigned a veteran operator as a mentor, serves as a bridge for new operators into the agency culture and work environment. The mentor helps the new operator acclimate to the agency, and serves as a source of information about operational policies and procedures, schedules, vehicles, and agency events. The mentor also provides a safe resource for questions and concerns the new operator may have (*27*).

The study in *TCRP Report 77* also identifies ways to enhance or establish partnering relationships between management and labor leadership as mechanisms for attracting, training, and maintaining a qualified workforce. Thirteen transit-agency case studies revealed commonalities and differences in how transit agencies respond to the challenge of maintaining a qualified workforce, especially in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions. The 55-page Human Resources Guide included in this report is a reference tool of best practices that transit agencies throughout the nation have found effective in recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce (*27*).

Employee retention is not a new issue, but the increasing mobility of the work force presents a stronger challenge to the retention of qualified workers. Factors that enhance retention range from quality-of-life improvements to a greater commitment to training and development. Retention has always been important, but it is taking on a new focus as competition to find and retain top-quality employees intensifies. *TCRP Report 77* concluded that while increased attention has been paid to recruiting qualified transit workers, little attention has been given to retaining employees. None of the 13 case studies of best practice organizations had a specific strategy for retaining employees in difficult-to-recruit and -retain positions. Each employed practices that have been helpful in this regard, but specific attention to retention was lacking (*27*).

Financial compensation is still a primary consideration for most workers. However, they also want opportunities to pursue their own interests and personal growth. Employer contributions to workers' quality of life and job satisfaction often include flex-time as well as a greater commitment to innovative approaches to recognize and reward their workers. Organizations that excel in these areas are seeing a positive difference in productivity gains and in retaining quality people (*20*).

TCRP Report 124 notes that some transit providers have increased compensation for demand response vehicle operators to make it more in line with fixed-route operator compensation. It also notes that some systems have taken steps in the procurement of services to ensure more stable vehicle operator workforces—such as specifying minimum levels of pay or requiring that, if there is a change in service providers, qualified vehicle operators be retained. (*7*)

Workforce Planning: A Tool for Facilitating Vehicle Operator Availability

The increasing number of baby boom retirements is expected to have a dramatic effect on the transportation industry. Planning for and developing a new workforce must begin in earnest but with a clear recognition that the new generation of employees will bring a different set of priorities, values, and talents to the work place. This generation grew up in the electronic age, is more comfortable with change, has greater expectations for job satisfaction, and is willing to challenge authority and be challenged by the demands of their work. The success of the new generation will depend to a great extent on the ability of employers to use their attributes and introduce the emerging work force to innovative approaches to work force planning and development (*20*).

The *TRB Special Report 275* emphasizes that in recruiting and retaining transit agency employees, one size does not fit all. Successful recruitment and retention practices depend largely on projecting the strategic needs of the organization and applying a diverse mixture of measures to meet those needs (8). One report produced by the Motor Carrier Council of Canada emphasized the importance of human resources planning in maintaining a qualified bus operator workforce.

Using planning tools and keeping up to date with economic and demographic changes and internal workforce characteristics can play a large part in securing and retaining the current and future workforce (37).

TCRP Synthesis Report 40: A Challenged Employment System: Hiring, Training, Performance Evaluation, and Retention of Bus Operators cites proactive bus operator workforce planning models at two transit agencies—San Diego Transit and Utah Transit Authority. At both agencies, these models address considerations such as agency historical experience, operating requirements, service changes, service variability, absenteeism rates, turnover, training and transition-to-work turnover, selection time frame, and training duration. While such models can be helpful, in order for them to reach their full potential, they require regular maintenance and data updating (34).

TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium provides guidelines that enable employers to assess their own workforce needs, especially in difficult-to-recruit and difficult-to-retain positions. The guidelines are presented in the form of a self-assessment tool that allows the user to examine policies, practices, and other factors that may influence a transit agency's ability to maintain a qualified workforce. The tool views recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce from a total system perspective, which requires an organizational team effort for maximum benefit of its use (27).

One aspect of workforce planning that organizations have begun to embrace is to begin planting the seeds to cultivate interest in young people much earlier. Reaching out to schools, vocational programs, and universities is an increasingly popular approach (*20*).

Successful Approaches Cited in Other Transportation Sectors

In *10 Ways to Reduce Driver Turnover,* Smith suggests that truck operator recruiters need more training and better tools. Recruiters are under pressure to hire anyone who qualifies under USDOT rules. The cost of poorly targeted advertising, unprofessional interviewing, and poorly defined and enforced qualification standards, followed by inadequate post-hiring training, all contribute to the high price of recruitment and retention. Smith says that organizations can remedy this dilemma by automating some of the tasks and providing recruiters with help on administrative details. Today's technology allows recruiters to build an operator information file as they talk with the operator. Automation can also give companies a readily accessible database of potential candidates. To address this issue, some companies are using "behavioral tests that evaluate key personality characteristics such as aggressiveness, sociability, patience and conformity." Smith goes on to state that the employer should create and clearly define and articulate career paths within the organization. In addition, new and existing operators should be recognized for their experience, good performance, skills, and tenure within the company (*38*).

New employee orientation has received considerable attention in literature as critical for new trucker assimilation. New employee orientation is the very first step of retention that prepares the new hire to feel like a part of the organization. Literature about new truck operator orientation suggests that operators should receive properly designed orientation training with clearly defined job expectations. Authors agree that strong orientation takes the guesswork out of a new job and provides guidelines for behavior so that new operators know from the start what is expected from them and what they can expect from the company. Macklin suggested approaches to a basic orientation include a welcome from a senior officer, completion of the administrative requirements for the hiring process and job specific subjects such as safety, benefits, compensation, company operations, maintenance procedures, tour of the facility, and hands-on demonstrations (*39*).

According to trucking estimates, as much as 75% of a carrier's turnover comes in the first 90 days after an operator is hired. Misunderstandings are a big factor in turnover during the first 90 days. Many believe it is due to poor orientation (*40*). Orientation should be the time when truck operators start forming relationships with others in the company. Fleet executives should visit each new orientation class and include a tour of the company to help operators connect with the whole company, not just their classroom. Operators should also meet their assigned dispatchers or fleet managers who are the operator's connection with the company on a daily basis (*33, 40*).

Belin and Lackwood suggested that the orientation should be spread over several weeks and include more than just a cursory introduction to the organization's policies and procedures. Their 2006 study, sponsored by SHRM, provides detailed guidelines for the development of an effective orientation program (*40*).

The study focused on the concept of orientation as effective *onboarding* that enables the new employee to learn the organizational culture and behavior. Retaining newcomers is a challenge and many leave within the first few months. The research focuses on *socialization*, "a process in which an individual acquires the attitudes, behaviors and knowledge needed to successfully participate as an organizational member." A typical socialization process includes the following three stages:

- **Anticipatory socialization** occurs before the new employee joins the organization. Through interactions with representatives of the business, such as recruiters and managers, the employee forms expectations about the organization and the job prior to entry.
- **The encounter** stage starts when the new employee begins a new job and starts to learn about job tasks and receives

training. At this point, managers can exert their influence by helping the new employee understand specific roles and duties. Also, by understanding the stresses and issues that newcomers experience, managers can help cultivate a high-quality work relationship with each newcomer.

- **Settling in** occurs when the new employee begins to feel comfortable with the demands of the new position and social relationships with fellow employees. The employee will be interested in learning how his or her performance will be evaluated and potential internal career opportunities (*41*).

The importance of management training and actions has received increased attention in employee retention literature. It is generally agreed that managers should be trained in people skills and how to recognize the signs of stress in themselves and in operators, and how to do something about it before it becomes problematic. Training should also include negotiation skills. Look for the win-win situation and solution. Vehicle operators also want to be shown appreciation and respect. A simple "thank you" can lead to a culture of "people appreciating people" and a great place to work. Regular performance reviews are also important. Reviews should note areas where operators excel and where performance can be improved, along with suggestions that help them make those improvements. Operators should also be able to bring up problems or issues that concern them (*40*).

According to Brandon, recruitment branding is a workforce planning concept that is gaining prominence in employment circles. The key to success is honestly portraying an organization's strengths and culture. The author suggests that the image an employer projects for potential hires should be honest. Employers should develop a list of five to 10 top, honest messages that the candidate needs to know: opportunity for advancement; chance to help in an important cause; the opportunity to develop highly prized skills; the respect of working for an industry leader; or the ability to reap benefits and perks. Hiring managers are no longer able to attract employees with just salary and benefits. Employees are looking for employers who are truthful on the front end. And since recruitment drives retention, employers may enjoy greater retention with *honesty* (*42*).

In *60 Ways to Improve Driver Recruitment and Retention,* Burkert provides an in-depth analysis of vehicle operator recruitment and retention issues in the trucking industry (*22*). While some of the information is specific to trucking, much is also applicable to bus and paratransit services.

Burkert points out that the potential employees sought by truck and bus employers are also sought by manufacturers, service establishments, construction employers, and dozens of other types of businesses. He notes that companies need to make themselves "stand out" to be successful in recruiting. Wages need to be competitive with these other job sectors or the pool of potential applicants will be reduced. He adds that it is also essential that companies "stand out" in terms of non-wage "people issues." Pay alone is not always the answer since other companies will probably be willing to match increases.

Burkert observes that job vacancies offer the temptation to fill a position with a less than ideal candidate but suggests that this can have disastrous consequences. Failing to hire properly may shift and delay costs and consequences, but it does not eliminate them. He states that "In the face of chronic operator shortages and strong customer demand for service, carriers first decline to discipline their vehicle operators, and then refuse to terminate, even in the face of poor performance, and finally and inevitably, lower their standards of conduct for the operators in their employ. This downward spiral is one that impacts company revenue, profits, employee productivity and, perhaps worst of all, operational safety."

Burkert also notes that hiring new employees isn't free, no matter how you do it. He states that estimates of the cost of hiring and placement range broadly but are almost always measured in the thousands of dollars. This claim is also supported by Diane Arthur in *The Employee Recruitment and Retention Handbook,* who notes that research indicates that the average cost per employee hired and trained is about 25% of that employee's annual salary (*42*).

Burkert points out that recruitment and retention are two sides of the same coin. Actions taken to retain current vehicle operators, assuming they are effective and meaningful, are often the same things that will attract job seekers. He offers the following three general strategies for being successful in recruitment and retention:

- Make your company a desirable place to work,
- Provide competitive wages and compensation, and
- Offer careers instead of jobs.

Burkert suggests that companies must first be realistic in analyzing which positive and negative factors and forces are in place to make an applicant feel that the company is either a desirable place to work or an unattractive one. He states that it is essential that promises to recruits be in line with reality. If new employees aren't going to get the best runs or hours they need, don't say they will. He states that "A swinging door that fills the 'bottom rung' of the company roster contributes nothing but additional costs."

Burkert cites studies that suggest that there are only a few things that really attract employees to companies, such as the following:

- Trust—a business and supervisors that employee can have faith in;
- Compatibility with peers—co-workers one can appreciate and take pride in; and

- Character of the work—challenges accompanied by management support.

He also claims studies show that what operators want and need from their jobs are the following:

- Appreciation of their efforts;
- Insight and information—being "in on things;"
- Recognition—not only awards and bonuses but recognition of their company decisions that take employee preferences into consideration to the extent possible;
- Respect—courtesy, equality and explanation;
- Pride in the job done;
- Adequate compensation;
- Security;
- A better balance between home and work time—one of the most frequent complaints about driving (in trucking) is the overwhelming demands on the individual's time;
- Better pay for the work done;
- Fringe benefits—"health insurance is the king;"
- Relationships with co-workers—build mechanisms for employees to interact; and
- Training opportunities.

Burkert points out that not all employees are driven by the "top dollar." Other factors are also important. But the wage must be competitive. He notes that higher wages are most beneficial to expand the labor pool from which a company might be able to draw applicants. He claims that competitive wages are critical to successful recruitment but notes that wages are only one of many factors in retention. He suggests that even with higher wages, other factors such as a negative work environment will still cause turnover. At the same time, he emphasizes the importance of a reasonable wage, stating: "No amount of company programming, feel-good incentives, image-building and 'friendly workplace' efforts will replace a livable wage. A job must allow employees to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families."

Burkert emphasizes the need to "hire attitude and train skills." He highlights a case study of a successful company that "began to hire persons with good attitudes and trained those individuals to drive" rather than just hiring "experienced" operators from other companies.

Burkert also emphasizes the need to offer vehicle operators opportunities for advancement. He states that in his opinion the difference between careers and jobs causes the worst of the trucking industry's operator shortage problem. He suggests that to really address the issue, companies must consider ways to create more "careers" and offer fewer and fewer "jobs." This means finding those who are seeking to make a long-term commitment to the job and giving them an opportunity to grow and earn.

Burkert indicates that another key part of the operator turnover problem is poor relationships between operators and supervisors, dispatchers, and managers. He emphasizes that supervisors, dispatchers, and managers must "talk, listen and respond" to operators.

Burkert lists the following 18 questions that he encourages companies to ask themselves if they are interested in reducing turnover:

1. Have you assured your wages are adequate and in line with prevailing labor rates? How do you know for sure?
2. Have you verified that the number of hours worked by employees meets their expectations?
3. Have you found ways to reduce downtime and time away from home? (mainly a trucking issue)
4. Have you provided personal growth through skill and knowledge training?
5. Have you considered "Hire an attitude, teach a skill?"
6. When was the last time you tried to learn what parts of the job your employees liked the most and the least?
7. If you have up-to-date information about employee likes and dislikes, what did you do about them?
8. What avenues have you provided for the operator to achieve personal status or recognition?
9. How have you enriched the vehicle operator's job?
10. How have you made driving at your company a career instead of a job?
11. Have you instituted a longevity incentive or bonus scheme?
12. Have your supervisors been trained in human relations skills?
13. Is there an effective system for internal two-way communication?
14. How do you keep employees informed about the company, its business and events and their role in each of these things?
15. How do you know there is no better place to work in your region?
16. Does your trip or route job assignment system meet both customer and employee needs?
17. Is there a means for operators to learn, grow and become more skilled?
18. Have you upgraded your standards so employees can take pride in where they work?

Finally, Burkert lists 60 ideas for helping with recruitment and retention of operators. While some are specific to the trucking industry, the following are applicable to bus and paratransit operations:

- Referral bonuses: should be about one week's typical pay.
- Pay referral bonuses incrementally based on new hire longevity.
- Diverse advertising through multiple advertising media.
- Multiple toll-free numbers linked to each advertising media so you can determine which is working best.
- Use recruiting websites: Don't overlook online recruiting and respond quickly to internet responses.
- Make quick hiring decisions to avoid losing the best applicants.

- Listen to the "buzz" in the industry about your company and working for your company.
- Recruiting telephone lines should be staffed by knowledgeable people who are there when calls come in and who can respond to questions; never put an employment call on hold; and staff on recruitment lines should have good telephone manners.
- Consider ex-military applicants and use post-military recruiting programs.
- Be sure that applicant expectations and descriptions given of the job match the reality.
- Emphasize hiring an attitude and then training the skills.
- Use applicant tests to assure a good match.
- Consider selective advertising on applicant pools that may have people with the right attitudes.
- Provide good training and use this as a recruitment feature and provide ongoing training opportunities.
- Attend job fairs.
- Try to design shifts that are attractive.
- Train supervisors in good management skills.
- Build a team and co-worker relationship.
- Offer trip assignments in a way that more evenly distributes the most desirable work.
- Sponsor company breakfasts and lunches and develop company social events.
- Distribute awards at public events attended by worker families.
- Seek input from vehicle operators.
- Develop opportunities for feedback and company interaction.
- Create a news and information system about the company.
- Give operators access (open-door policies).
- Avoid mediocre job and employee performance requirements.
- Create a suggestion box.
- Pay attention to the company image.

Focus Group Findings

Input on recruitment and retention was also obtained from operators, front-line supervisors, and managers through a series of focus group meetings. To allow for a broad cross-section of participants, the focus groups were conducted remotely via conference calls. Participants from across the country were identified, contacted, and asked to call in to the meetings.

Four focus groups were conducted—two with operators, one with supervisors of operators, and one with managers of paratransit services, representing nine transit systems. Two objectives formed the basis for questions asked during the focus groups: (1) to get views of participants on factors that affect paratransit vehicle operator recruitment and (2) to get views on factors that affect retention of vehicle operators.

The participating systems were identified and selected with the assistance of the project's Expert Panel. One group of operators was selected from systems considered stable from the standpoint of recruitment and retention of paratransit operators. A second focus group was conducted with operators from agencies considered challenged in the areas of recruitment and retention of operators. In three of the systems considered stable, operators were employed to drive both paratransit and fixed-routes. In the challenged systems, operators were hired solely to drive paratransit vehicles. For both groups, two operators were selected from each agency. In order to get the views of both newer and veteran operators, the team, with the assistance of provider managers, selected from each agency one operator with less than two years of service and one with more than three years of service. In most cases, both operators who had been selected joined in on the focus group call. Each participant received a $50 stipend for their participation.

The nine participants in the supervisor focus group were all direct supervisors of vehicle operators. The manager focus group consisted of a combination of nine operations managers and general managers.

At the beginning of each focus group, the moderator made overview comments, which are summarized in the following statements:

- Each session was scheduled for two hours, with a 5-minute break midway through the session.
- A series of pre-approved questions was asked during this session. Each person was to give their first name with each response to ensure comments were accurately recorded.
- The session was being recorded digitally to facilitate accurate recording and analysis of comments made during the session.
- If there was time left at the end of the session, participants would be given an opportunity to provide additional information that may help the research team better understand issues related to paratransit vehicle operator recruitment and retention.

Subsequent to the introductory remarks, the moderator asked participants to introduce themselves and tell how long they had been employed in paratransit services and how long they had been in their current positions. The following section captures the essence of focus group findings.

Attractiveness of the Operator Position

Operators in both groups reported that they were attracted to the position of paratransit vehicle operator for a variety of reasons. The most frequent response was the desire to help people, followed by liking to drive, being outside, and being independent. While the most frequent position previously

held was in retail or a similar level job, some took the operator position because of the opportunity for a post-retirement career change.

Operators from challenged systems unanimously agreed that they were attracted to the job and remain on the job because they liked driving and/or working with people with disabilities. The following are examples of statements made by participants:

- "I enjoy serving my clients. It's rewarding."
- "I enjoy helping people who might not have anyone else."
- "Working with people with disabilities you get to know them well."
- "I love working with people with disabilities and seniors."
- "I like being out here by myself."

Operators concurred on what they felt typically attracts other applicants to the position of vehicle operator. The desire to help others was listed most often. In a few cases, the reputation of the transit agency or contracting company was listed as a factor that attracts applicants. In systems where the level of pay was described as "good," this was seen as attractive to applicants. The same factors that attract other operators were mentioned as the reasons they stay on as operators, with some focus group participants remaining on the job for up to 15 years or more. In addition to the reasons that were mentioned for being attracted to the position, the relationships operators form with clients over a period of months or years were cited as reasons some people stay on the job. Two participants in the stable group mentioned the good pay and benefits as well as the transit agency being like a family as factors contributing to longevity of operators.

The views of the majority (75%) of supervisors on what attracts people to apply for paratransit operator positions paralleled those of operators. They concurred that the desire to help others is the primary attraction to the position. Two supervisors mentioned that often people do not know what the job entails before completing an application. It is their belief that sometimes job seekers see a sign for a job opening and because of difficult economic times apply for the paratransit operator job in search of job security.

Why Some Do Not Apply

Operators in the challenged group unanimously agreed that the wage level for paratransit operators is a major barrier to recruiting and retaining paratransit operators stating the following: "The pay needs to be raised for all we do. The pay is too low and the responsibility so big. The job does not pay much unless you are with the company for a long time." In addition, the uncertainty of schedules was cited as a possible reason that others do not apply.

Several operators in the challenged and stable system groups mentioned inability or lack of desire to work with people with disabilities or the mentally challenged as reasons that some people may not apply. One operator stated, "It isn't for everyone." The inability to read maps was cited as a deterrent to some applying for the position. Other factors cited by operators were the lack of knowledge of the service area, followed by low pay and benefits, and licensing requirements.

Supervisors expressed the belief that not knowing the layout of the service area is the primary reason people do not apply for the operator position. In addition, low pay and licensing requirements were cited as deterrents to attracting applicants. Several supervisors stated that overall benefits packages for paratransit operators are pretty bleak compared to those of fixed-route operators and adversely impact recruitment. In areas where the pay and benefits are considered good and are comparable to fixed-route operators, such as occurs in the stable systems, maintaining a satisfactory applicant pool is not considered a problem.

Managers in challenged systems also saw the pay structure and poor benefits as the primary issues in attracting operators. One person described the pay as being "the same wages as Wal-Mart." The initial training pay is also a problem because in most cases, training wages are less than post-training pay. Lack of customer service skills were cited by managers in challenged and stable systems as a problem in attracting the right type of people to the job.

How Providers Attract Applicants

Operators in both groups identified a number of approaches that their employers use to attract vehicle operator applicants, with varying degrees of success. Ads on buses, banners in front of the transit facilities, newspaper ads, and word of mouth are some of the most frequently used. The operators felt that word of mouth was one of the most effective recruiting tools. They mentioned that as they are driving their routes, people ask them about their jobs and inquire about openings. In this way, operators become informal recruiters for their employers. Some providers offer employee referral programs, in which the referring operator receives a bonus when the person they refer is hired, and a second payment if the person remains with the provider for a certain period of time.

Several managers also spoke about the importance of word of mouth as a recruiting tool. Five described formalized employee referral programs to encourage employees to spread the word about job opportunities at their agencies. Through referral bonuses given at various intervals, employees have an incentive to identify potential operators. Five managers also mentioned the practice of placing ads on Internet sites such as the contractor's website, Craigslist, Monster, Career Builder, and in unemployment offices and

job placement centers. One manager stated that the system has had very positive results using one particular Internet source to secure applicants, especially younger computer savvy job seekers.

Why Operators Leave

Operators from challenged systems stated that a major barrier to retaining operators is the lack of recognition by the employer. One operator stated, "They are so used to managing turnover, they have forgotten how to manage people." At one system the operator stated, "Every now and then they might give us a barbeque but other than that, they don't do anything to try to keep you." Another operator from a challenged system reported that there is a once-a-year banquet, but only the fixed-route operators get recognized.

Operators in the challenged group identified the way their employer makes shift assignments as a major reason people leave claiming that they will "schedule you a day off and then will draft you to work on your off day." Shifts based on seniority were also identified as barriers to retention. One operator, a female, reported that late night flex shifts are "discouraging and kind of frightening since the system operates until midnight."

Approximately 80% of operators in the challenged group commented that fringe benefits for paratransit operators are inadequate. The following are quotes from the group: "We need better benefits. Always changing insurance and giving us bad benefits." One operator commented, "The people who drive the big buses get more holidays than the paratransit operators."

Operators in the stable group had more difficulty stating why most people leave their employment because there is very low turnover at their agencies. In most of these cases, operators drive both fixed-route and paratransit assignments. These operators feel that the most common reason operators leave is that they cannot deal with the stress of working with people who are different or with disabilities. Some feel that operators may leave because they are looking for something different. Schedules and the inability to read a map were cited by more than one operator as possible factors contributing to people leaving. In one locale with a number of transit agencies to select from, operators move from one system to another for higher pay. It is not uncommon for operators to come to an agency, get their Commercial Driver's License, and go elsewhere, presumably for higher pay.

Six of the nine supervisors (67%) gave poor attendance as the primary reason for involuntary termination of operators. The next most frequent reason given is accidents, which three participants highlighted. Fifty percent stated that they have difficulty covering runs, with some runs having to be distributed as add-ons. In some cases, supervisors and managers must cover runs. Two supervisors stated they have a sufficient number of operators available, one with an extensive extraboard (shared with fixed-route). Supervisors estimate annual turnover rates range from under 20% to 50%, with the majority ranging between 35% and 50%.

Managers reported hours of work and working on weekends as other reasons operators leave the company. Thirty-seven percent of the managers stated that operators leave for more money. One manager stated that some use operator pay as a second income. Another stated that turnover seems to occur most often at the bottom of the pay scale. Managers unanimously reported that attendance was the primary reason for involuntary termination. One manager added that accidents and relocation due to the rising cost of living were also frequent reasons.

Managers report that initial training for operators ranges from 1.5 to 8 weeks in length. Those with 4 weeks or less concur that training should be longer. Four managers estimated that 50% of new hires do not complete training. One particular area of concern is the need for more time learning to read maps. Those with training lasting up to 8 weeks typically are training for paratransit and fixed-route runs at the same time.

Factors Adversely Affecting Operator Satisfaction and Performance

According to the supervisor group, scheduling is the most frequently cited source of frustration for paratransit operators, with seven of nine supervisors making statements in that regard. In cases where an organization other than the service provider develops the schedule, the problem is exacerbated. The most common complaint is that the schedules are "too tight" with not enough time to get from one point to another safely. In addition, the number of unscheduled trips, in one case up to 53 a day, is an ongoing challenge for operators. One supervisor stated that 99% of operator complaints are about scheduling. The second most frequent source of dissatisfaction reported by operators is the disrespectful behavior of dispatchers.

The major complaint from challenged systems operators regarding operating policies and practices revolved around the attitude and support of dispatchers. Operators stated that dispatchers take a long time to respond to their calls. One operator stated: "You don't get help from them. They don't know the city themselves. It is frustrating when you can't do what you could do because of poor planning." The degree of operator frustration is illustrated in the following comments:

- "Scheduling is not good."
- "Lots of favoritism—better routes go to the people they get along with."
- "Will send two buses to one house for two people."
- "Not enough time allotted to do the run; then they do an add-on."

- "Dispatchers are disrespectful and rude."
- "Dispatchers sometimes don't sympathize with what the operators are dealing with."

Managers also identified scheduling as an issue that impacts operator satisfaction. Participants reported that operators leave due to unfavorable work hours and the schedules. Operators want weekends and holidays off. One manager stated that changes in the schedule could result in starting 30 minutes earlier than originally scheduled and ending as much as 90 minutes later than scheduled. Managers concurred with operators that disrespectful dispatchers negatively impact operator job satisfaction.

Improvement of Job Satisfaction and Performance

Several systems allow operator trainees additional time to master the knowledge and skills to become proficient and comfortable with the position. Those systems that do a realistic job preview during the application process and early on in training seem to have better success at retaining operators.

Supervisors described a number of approaches their employers use to improve vehicle operator job satisfaction and performance. Most were described in terms of incentives: 55% (5) give safety awards; 33% (3) give attendance awards; 33% (3) recognize the employee of the month and/or employee of the year; and 33% (3) issue team rather than individual awards. In several cases, employers use a combination of incentives to recognize employees. The types of awards vary from system to system: plaques, rings, pendants, cash bonuses (up to $250), tee shirts, and gift certificates.

One manager reported that the employer cannot afford to give bonuses; however, operators were recognized with promotions and at safety meetings. Another reported quarterly bonuses ($250) and a corporate bonus of an extra $100. A third manager stated that if goals are met, the employee receives $50 per goal met. Similar to supervisor comments, managers cited recognition programs to include commendations, gatherings off property, employee of the month, preferred parking, recognition pins, bi-monthly bonus for safety and attendance, customer commendations, and regional operator of the year competition. Other examples given included regularly scheduled open forums in which operators get to talk about anything they want to discuss. Operators who receive customer commendations also receive a letter and certificate from the general manager, and the commendation is posted on the company bulletin board.

In most cases, supervisors and managers stated that operators can take their concerns to their supervisor or manager. In some cases, committees are in place for the airing of concerns.

Quality of Processes for Resolving Operator Issues

Supervisors rated the quality of the processes used to resolve operator issues on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being the highest rating possible. While the ratings ranged from 3 to 5, the average rating was 4.3, and only two gave ratings below 4. Supervisors cited things like open policies, monthly safety meetings, and union meetings—"We do a lot of listening, a lot of avenues—safety committees, run-cutting committees, culture club."

Managers expressed their desire to make employees feel they are appreciated and listened to, and that they provide opportunities that encourage operators to communicate their concerns. These programs include monthly lunches to say thank you (for example, Circle of Excellence), an anonymous call line, and an open door policy. Managers state they spend time with operators, have suggestion boxes, and mentoring programs. On the same scale of 1 to 5 used by supervisors, managers rated the effectiveness of current procedures in handling operator complaints at an average of 3.5.

One operator reported that although management says they have an open door policy, when suggestions are made, they respond by saying "we can't do it that way."

Implications of Findings

The public service nature of ADA paratransit and the importance to operators of providing an important service was a strong theme throughout the discussions. The sense that many individuals leave the position because they are not people-oriented reinforces this theme and underscores the importance of recruiting individuals who are customer-service oriented.

The expressed opinions that some individuals take the job thinking it is a "driving" job, only to find out it involves much more, suggests a need for improved pre-screening of candidates and for more accurate previews of the job.

The low level of compensation, both wages and limited benefits, was also a clear theme. The differences in compensation between fixed-route operators and paratransit operators were also mentioned. Compensation in contracted services, in particular, appears to be an issue that will require innovative procurement and contracting efforts.

Tight scheduling and the frustrations of having to perform difficult schedules also proved to be an important factor. Given that tight resources and tight scheduling are likely to be a long-term phenomenon, a realistic approach may be to develop more effective lines of communication that "take the pressure off" vehicle operators. Developing a "team" attitude toward the difficulties of the situation, rather than allowing operators to feel like they are failing individually, may be important in systems that are facing capacity and scheduling

pressures. Dispatch, supervisor and management support in these cases would seem to be crucial. Ongoing recognition of the efforts made by operators would also seem to be vital.

Poor work shifts for those without seniority was a noted factor. Alternative ways to structure shifts to better share the burden of weekend and evening capacity needs may be needed. Incentives or pay differentials for less desirable shifts might also be considered.

Problems that can be more easily addressed include issues people may have with map reading as well as operators leaving or not applying because they do not know the area. The findings suggest a need for better pre-screening of applicants to identify individuals who have a reasonable sense of direction and map reading skills. Greater use of tools for identifying applicants who have map reading and directional skills seems to be needed. To address these issues, more extensive training in map reading and orientation to the service may be helpful. Advanced technologies such as GPS systems could also assist vehicle operators who might have greater difficulty reading and understanding maps.

CHAPTER 3

National Survey Results

Development of the Survey

A survey was also developed and administered to get broad feedback from the industry on ADA paratransit vehicle operator issues. The survey was developed to be answered both by public transit agencies and by private companies providing ADA paratransit services under contract to public entities. A general set of questions was developed to be answered by all public transit agencies, regardless of whether they operated service directly or contracted out for some or all of the service. Additional questions were then included for public transit agencies that operated some or all of their ADA paratransit service in-house.

Public transit agencies that contracted out for some or all of their ADA paratransit service were then asked to forward the survey to all of their private contractors. The survey was structured to then get specific information from these private contractors.

Finally, the survey was structured to have slightly different questions for public agencies and private contractors who operated only ADA paratransit service versus those who were involved in the operation of both ADA paratransit and fixed-route services. For example, for entities that operated both types of services, questions about pay rates and fringe benefits asked for information for both modes.

A copy of the questions included in the electronic survey is provided in Appendix A.

Distribution of the Survey

Two separate electronic mailings of the survey were completed. The first, in March of 2008, was sent to 352 public transit agencies included on the member contact list of the American Public Transit Association (APTA). APTA provided an electronic list of these member agencies. The survey was sent electronically to the persons listed as the primary APTA contacts with instructions to forward it to the appropriate individuals in the agency.

A second electronic mailing was conducted in May 2008 to 282 public transit agencies listed as members of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). The list provided by CTAA was cross-checked with the APTA list to eliminate duplicates.

Responses

The online survey link was kept open through June of 2008. Responses were received from 76 public transit agencies. In some cases, respondents did not complete all of the questions in the survey. Of the 76 public transit agencies that responded, 50 complete responses were received.

Responses were also received from 47 private contractors. This included 39 contractors who provided service for 26 of the public transit agencies that also completed the survey. In some cases, this included multiple contractors for a single transit agency. It also included eight private contractors of public transit agencies that did not complete the survey (the public entities forwarded the survey to their contractor without completing the public agency questions).

In total, a response—either from the public transit agency and/or from one or more contractors—was received from 84 transit districts across the country. Given that surveys were sent to 634 different public agencies, this represents about a 13% response rate.

Responses were received from public transit agencies and private contractors in 27 states. Of the 76 public transit agencies that responded, 21 were in large urban areas, 26 were in medium-sized cities, and 29 were in rural areas or small urban communities.

Responses were also received from service providers of all sizes. The total number of ADA paratransit vehicle operators ranged from 2 to 522. Table 3-1 shows the distribution of respondents by number of total ADA paratransit operators employed. As shown, a total of 69 respondents indicated that they employed vehicle operators directly. Among these 69, there was a fairly good distribution of operations by size.

Table 3-1. Distribution of survey respondents.

Number of ADA Paratransit Vehicle Operators	Number of Respondents
2-25	13
26-50	9
51-75	13
76-100	10
101-200	18
201+	6
Total	69

Perceived Impacts of Operator Recruitment and Retention (Public Entities)

Public transit agencies were asked to indicate what impact vehicle operator recruitment and retention had on ADA paratransit services in their area. They were asked to indicate if there had been no impact, minimal adverse impact, a moderate adverse impact, or a significant adverse impact. A "Not Sure" response option was also provided. A total of 83 responses to this question were received from public transit agencies. As noted in the beginning of this section, responses were received from a total of 76 different public transit agencies. In a few cases, multiple responses to this question were received from the same transit agency. Thirty of these contracted out and 53 provided services in-house. Responses are shown in Figure 3-1.

Overall, 20 of the 83 agencies (24%) indicated that vehicle operator recruitment and retention had no impact on services. Another 18 agencies (22%) indicated that vehicle operator recruitment had minimal impact. Twenty-five agencies (30%) indicated a moderate impact, and 18 agencies (22%) indicated a significant impact.

Responses varied significantly depending on whether services were operated in-house or contracted. Nineteen of the 20 entities that reported "No Impact" were transit agencies that operated services in-house. Eleven of the 18 that indicated "Minimal Impact" were also in-house operations. On the other hand, 15 of the 25 that reported "Moderate Impact" were contracted operations, but 11 of the 18 that reported "Significant Impacts" were in-house operations.

Workforce Status

In order to gauge the seriousness of the issue from providers as well as administering agencies, a second question about impacts was asked. All entities that operated service, both public entities that provided service in-house as well as private contractors, were asked to indicate the status of their paratransit vehicle operator workforces. They were asked to

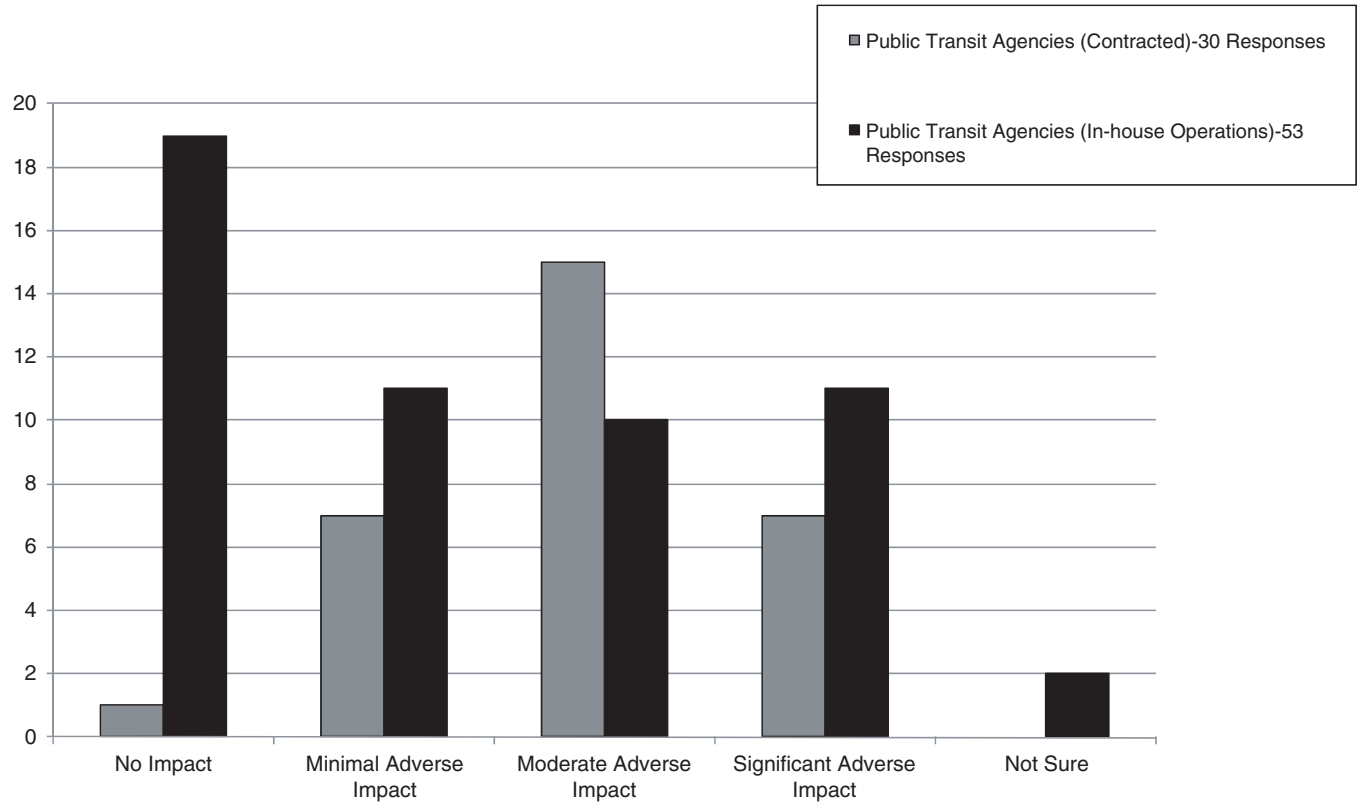


Figure 3-1. Perceived impacts of vehicle operator recruitment and retention.

indicate if they (1) had a full complement of operators and had no issues, (2) did not always have a full complement of operators and had experienced somewhat of a problem, or (3) experienced constant shortages of vehicle operators and had significant ongoing issues with recruitment and retention. A "Not Sure" response option was also provided.

A total of 67 agencies and companies provided a response to this question. This included 26 public agencies that operated all or some service in-house and 41 private contractors. Responses are shown in Figure 3-2. Sixty-two (24 public agencies and 38 private contractors) indicated one of the standard responses offered. Five provided "other" information different from the standard responses offered.

Overall, 23 of the 62 respondents (37%) indicated that they had a full complement of vehicle operators. Twenty-eight respondents (or 45%) indicated that they do not always have a full complement and experienced some service issues related to operator recruitment and retention. Ten respondents (16%) indicated a constant shortage of operators and a significant impact on services.

Again, there was some difference between public entities that operated service and private contractors. Twelve of the 24 public entities that answered this question (50%) indicated a full workforce and no issues. A lower percentage of private contractors (11 of 38, or 29%) reported a full workforce. Seven public entities (28%) indicated some workforce shortages and some service issues. On the other hand, 21 of 38 private contractors (55%) reported some workforce shortages and some service issues. Equal percentages of public and private agencies reported a constant workforce shortage—4 of the 25 public entities (16%), and 6 of the 38 private contractors (16%).

Pre-Qualification Requirements

Most ADA paratransit services require pre-qualifications for ADA paratransit vehicle operators. These include minimum age requirements, good driving records, no criminal background, and other requirements. Respondents who indicated that they hired and managed ADA paratransit vehicle operators were asked to indicate the types of pre-qualifications used in their systems. Seven common pre-qualifications were listed as well as an "Other" option. Figure 3-3 shows responses to this question.

As shown in Figure 3-3, all 69 public agencies and private contractors that provided this information required a good driving record, criminal background checks, and pre-employment drug and alcohol tests. All but one also had a minimum age requirement. Sixty respondents (87%) also required proficiency in English. CDL licenses are required of all vehicle operators at 29 of the 69 systems (42%). Another

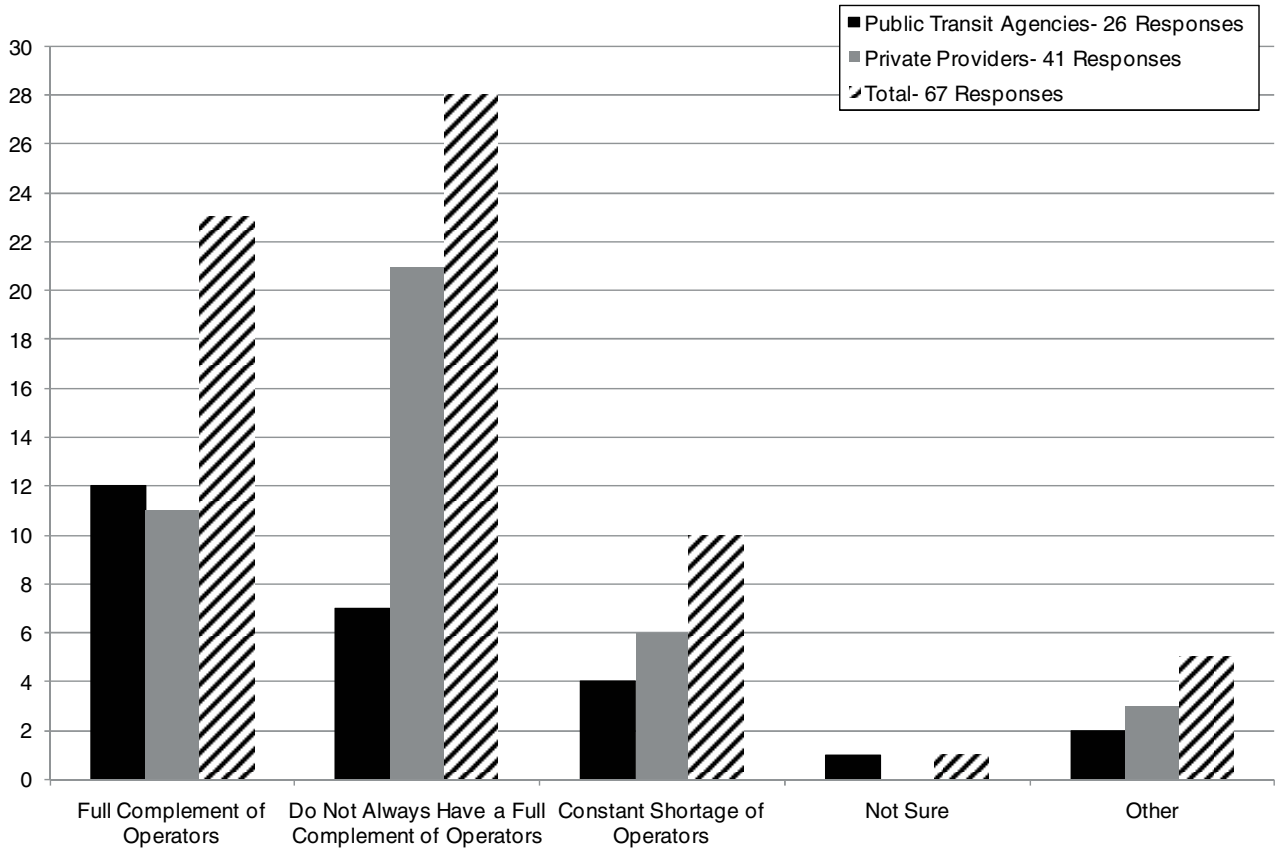


Figure 3-2. Paratransit vehicle operator workforce status.

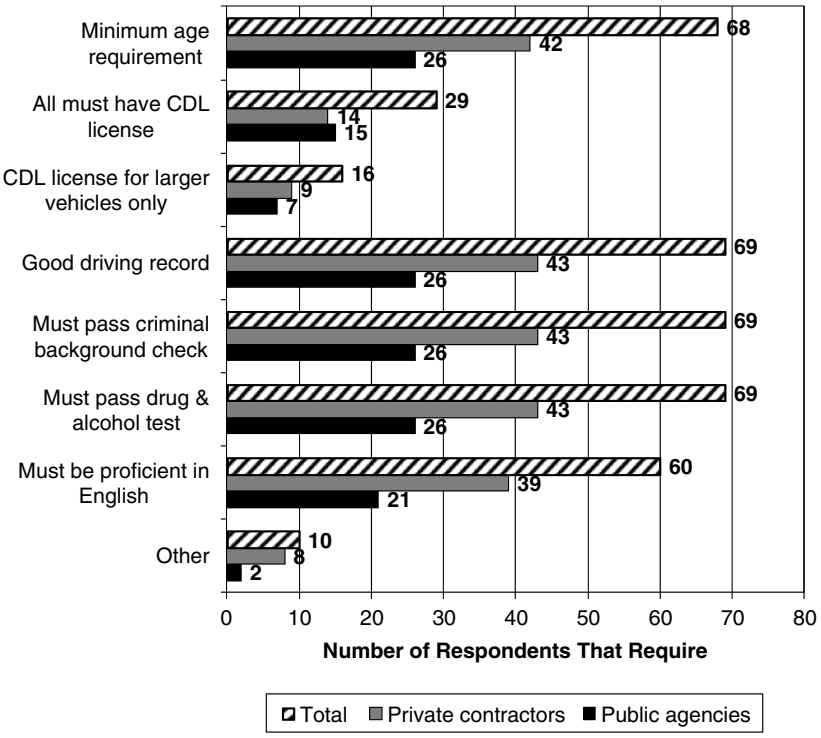


Figure 3-3. ADA paratransit vehicle operator pre-qualifications.

16 systems (23%) only require CDL licenses for operators who drive larger vehicles in the fleet.

Ten respondents indicated that they had other pre-qualification requirements not on the survey list. These other requirements included the following:

- "Pre-employment physical."
- "Must pass FCE prior to starting work."
- "Approved I-9 Identification to work in USA."
- "Mapping skills, customer service skills."
- "Attend defensive driving courses. Also, CPR, first aid. Also, University of Wisconsin Passenger Safety and Sensitivity training."
- "We offer paid training. This includes training for the CDL license. Must be able to read a map book. Must have good customer relation skills. Must be open to working all shifts and weekends. Must be able to work well with passengers with disabilities."
- "Out of State Residency Check."
- "Act 33 Child Abuse Clearance."
- "Must complete the following training programs: Defensive Driving, Passenger Assistance, Map Reading, First Aid/CPR."
- "There is no pre-qualification that an applicant must have a CDL license, however, they must be able to attain one as it is necessary to have this license prior to working as an Operator and they will receive it through the training process."

Hours of Training

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how many hours of classroom training and on-the-road training were provided to ADA paratransit vehicle operators. A review of the responses indicated there was a significant difference between the number of hours of training provided by many public transit agencies versus hours of training provided by private contractors providing service on behalf of public transit agencies. Figure 3-4 shows the average hours of each type of training for public agencies, private contractors, and for all respondents.

Overall, ADA paratransit vehicle operators receive an average of 127 total hours of training which includes 59 hours of classroom training and 68 hours of on-the-road training. Operators employed by public transit agencies receive significantly more training. These employees receive an average of 182 total hours of training, made up of 88 hours of classroom training and 94 hours of on-the-road training. Private contractors reported providing an average of 97 hours of total training—43 hours of classroom training and 54 hours of on-the-road training.

Training Completion Rates

All respondents who indicated that they operated services were asked to indicate how many vehicle operator candidates had started training in the past 12 months and how many

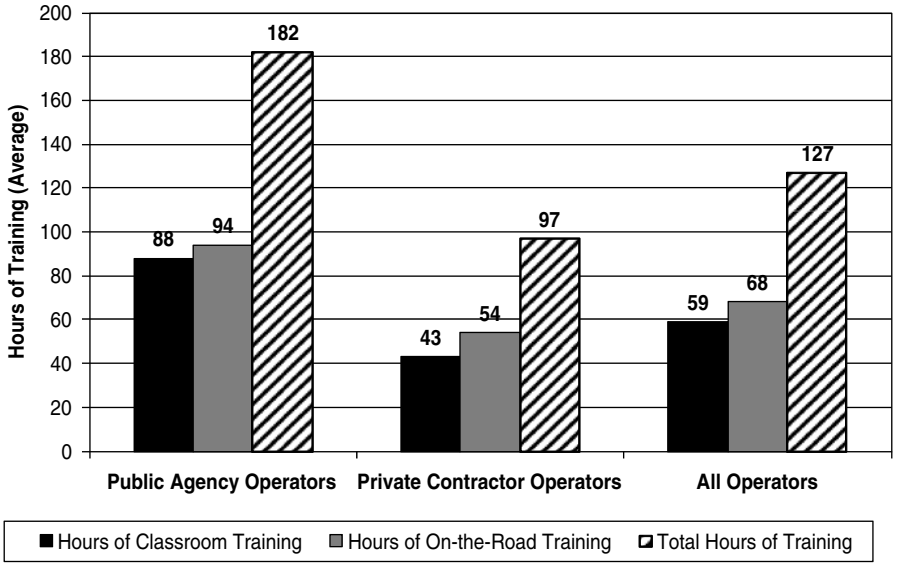


Figure 3-4. Average hours of classroom, on-the-road, and total training for ADA paratransit vehicle operators hired by public transit agencies and private contractors.

completed the training. A training completion percentage was then calculated for each. Reported training completion rates are shown in Figure 3-5 for both public and private entities. Note that four systems indicated a 0% training completion rate. These were relatively small systems (three public and one private) that had little or no turnover and therefore few or no trainees.

Fifty-nine respondents provided this information—25 public agencies and 34 private contractors. Overall, the 59 respondents indicated that 66% of recruits completed training and 34% did not. For public entities, the average completion rate was 77%, and the drop-out rate 23%. For private contractors, an average of 60% of recruits completed training while 40% did not.

Reasons for High Training Drop-Out Rates

Respondents who reported that a relatively high percentage of recruits did not complete training (defined in the survey as more than 33%) were asked to indicate why they felt the drop-out rate was high. Twelve respondents offered the following explanations for the high turnover rates in their system.

- "I believe that this job requires more skills than just driving. Many applicants apply for a driving position and then realize it also requires a high level of customer service, patience, and compassion. Once they realize it is more than just driving, they tend to seek other employment. I feel the pay rates for operators in this capacity should be several dollars per hour higher than the national average is currently paying. Additionally, a lack of benefits such as medical insurance has lead to high turnover rates as well."
- "Low pay and/or training wage."
- "More responsibility than salary warrants."
- "Work is harder than anticipated."
- "Failure of background checks."
- "Inability to map route/decipher manifest."
- "Difficulty working with persons with disabilities."
- "Too much stress."
- "Overall job pressure."
- "Conflicting second jobs."
- "Failure of Class B license exam."
- "Problems understanding technology."

Five of the reasons included in the previous list cite the stresses, responsibilities, and difficulties of the job. Three also cite low pay and poor fringe benefits, and two of these indicate that the compensation does not match the requirements and difficulties of the job. Difficulties with map reading, understanding the required technology, failing Class B exams, and conflicting second jobs were cited once each.

Annual Post-Training Turnover Rates

Respondents that provide ADA paratransit service directly were also asked to indicate the total number of ADA paratransit vehicle operators in the workforce and the number of post-training vehicle operator terminations in the past

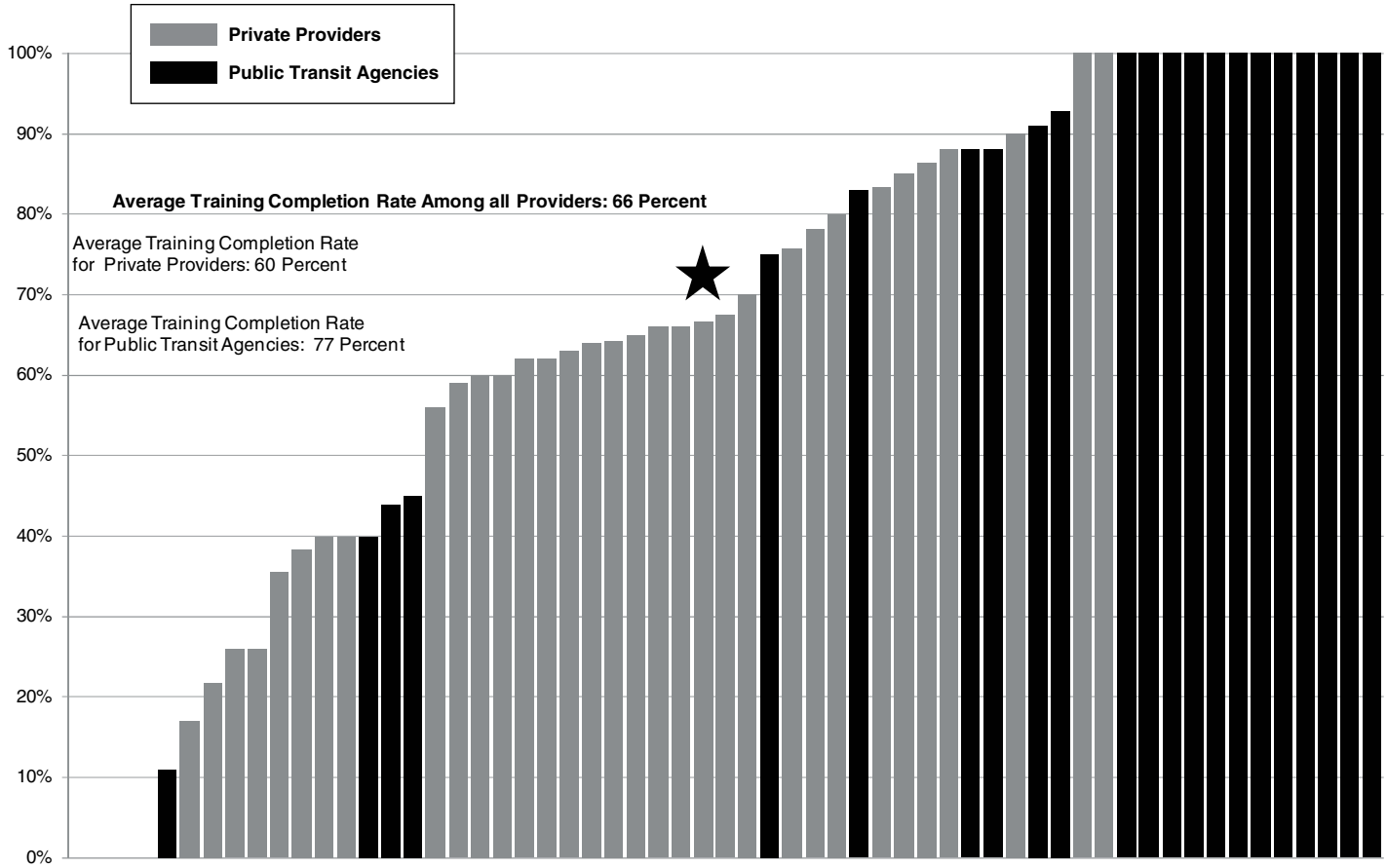


Figure 3-5. Training completion rates for public and private paratransit operators.

12 months. An annual turnover rate for vehicle operators was then calculated. Reported annual turnover rates are shown on Figure 3-6. Again, rates reported by public entities are shown in black and rates for private companies in gray. Note that all five of the systems that indicated no turnover in the past 12 months were public entities.

Sixty-three respondents provided the information used in Figure 3-6—23 public entities and 40 private companies. Overall, the 63 respondents indicated an annual post-training ADA paratransit vehicle operator turnover rate of 27%. For public entities, the average annual turnover rate was 14%. For private contractors, the average annual turnover rate was 30%.

Work Assignments

Respondents who indicated that they provided ADA paratransit services directly were asked to indicate how paratransit work was assigned to vehicle operators. Three choices were provided as well as an "Other" response where another method could be described. The three provided choices were: "Vehicle operators pick work shifts based on seniority," "Vehicle operators are hired for a specific work shift and the shift does not vary," and "Vehicle operators are assigned work shifts by managers/schedulers as needed." Figure 3-7 shows the responses to this question.

As shown in Figure 3-7, most ADA paratransit vehicle operators pick work shifts based on seniority. This is the case in 55 of the 68 systems (81%) that responded to the question about how paratransit work is assigned. In 13 systems (19%), managers and schedulers assign work to operators as needed. No systems indicated that vehicle operators are hired for specific work shifts. One private company indicated "Other" and noted that work is assigned in all three ways, with some work selected based on seniority, some assigned by managers/schedulers as needed, and some vehicle operators hired for specific shifts.

Use of Split Shifts

In order to efficiently provide capacity only during morning and afternoon peak periods, some transit agencies use split shifts. Operators are asked to work several hours through the morning peak period, take a 2-3 hour unpaid break during the middle of the day, and then work for several hours through the afternoon peak. This practice of using split shifts is used for both fixed-route and paratransit services. It sometimes is

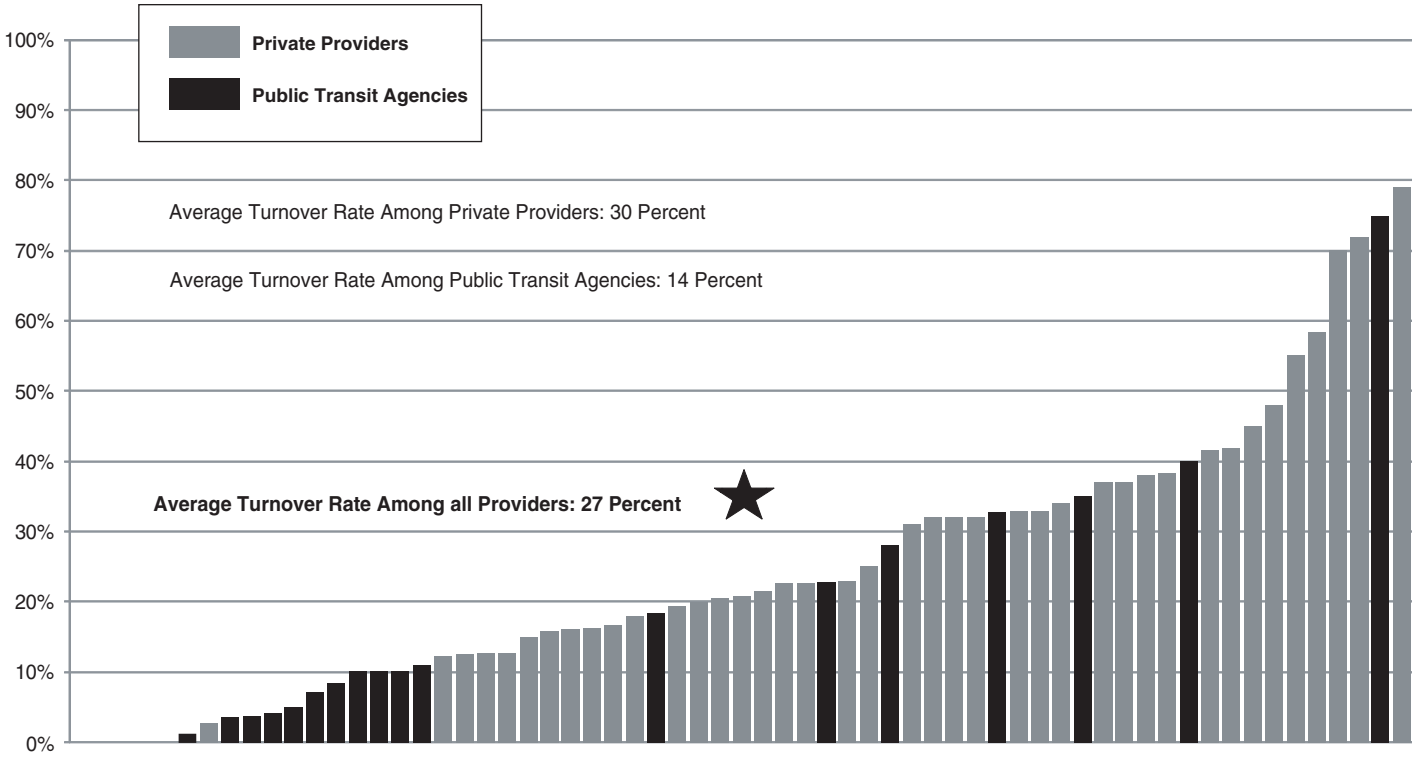


Figure 3-6. Annual ADA paratransit vehicle operator turnover rates.

not popular with vehicle operators, and excessive use of split shifts could affect job satisfaction and retention.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what percentage of ADA paratransit vehicle operators were asked to work split shifts. They were also asked to indicate if these operators were full-time or part-time employees. Finally, they were asked for similar information about fixed-route vehicle operators if they indicated that they directly operated both types of services. Table 3-2 summarizes the responses received.

A total of 67 respondents provided this information. This included 24 public systems that operate services directly and 43 private contractors. Twenty of the public agencies indicated that they operate both ADA paratransit and fixed-route services and four provide just ADA paratransit service. Ten of

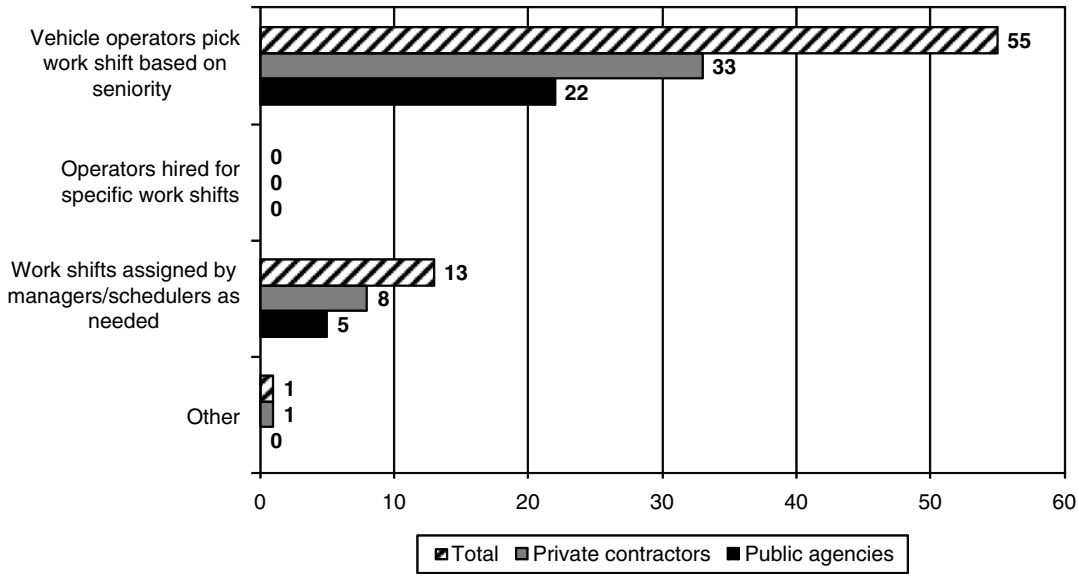


Figure 3-7. How paratransit work is assigned.

Table 3-2. Use of split shifts in ADA paratransit and fixed-route operations by public transit agencies and private contractors.

	Public Transit Agencies	Private Contractors	Total
Total Responses	**24**	**43**	**67**
Systems Providing *ADA Paratransit*	**24**	**43**	**67**
Using **full-time** paratransit operators for split shifts	19	23	42
Average % of **full-time** paratransit Operators working split shifts	28%	18%	22%
Using **part-time** paratransit operators for split shifts	7	11	18
Average % of **part-time** paratransit Operators working split shifts	18%	10%	13%
Systems Providing Fixed-Route Service	**20**	**10**	**30**
Using **full-time** fixed-route operators for split shifts	18	8	26
Average % of **full-time** fixed-route Operators working split shifts	37%	31%	35%
Using **part-time** fixed-route operators for split shifts	7	3	10
Average % of **part-time** fixed-route Operators working split shifts	22%	11%	19%

the 43 private contractors operate both ADA paratransit and fixed-route service, and 33 indicated that they operate only ADA paratransit services.

Overall, 42 public and private respondents indicated that some full-time paratransit operators were assigned split shifts. On average, 22% of the full-time paratransit operators in these systems worked split shifts. Only 18 of the respondents indicated that part-time operators were used for split shifts in paratransit operations. In these systems, about 13% of part-timers were assigned split shifts.

Use of split shifts was more prevalent in fixed-route operations. Overall, 26 of the 30 public agencies and private contractors that operated fixed-route services indicated that full-time fixed-route operators were assigned split shifts. On average, 35% of the full-time fixed-route operators in these systems worked split shifts. Ten of the 20 fixed-route systems indicated that part-time operators were used for split shifts. In these systems, about 19% of part-time operators were assigned split shifts.

Public transit agencies reported using split shifts slightly more than private contractors. Nineteen of the 24 public agencies that provide ADA paratransit services directly indicated using some full-time paratransit operators for split shifts. On average, about 28% of the full-time operators in these 19 systems worked split shifts. Only seven of the 24 public systems indicated using part-time paratransit operators for split shifts. In these seven systems, about 18% of part-time paratransit operators worked split shifts.

Use of split shifts was more prevalent in public fixed-route operations. Eighteen of the 20 public agencies that reported providing fixed-route services directly indicated that full-time fixed-route operators work splits shifts. Seven of the 20 systems used part-time fixed-route operators for splits. On average, 37% of full-time fixed-route operators work split shifts, and 22% of part-time fixed-route operators work split shifts.

Twenty-three of the 43 private contractors reported using full-time operators for split shifts in ADA paratransit operations. On average, about 18% of full-time paratransit operators in these 23 systems worked split shifts. Only 11 of the 43 private contractors reported using part-time paratransit operators for split shifts. In the 11 systems, about 10% of part-time paratransit operators worked split shifts.

The 10 private contractors that operated fixed-route as well as paratransit services reported greater use of split shifts in fixed-route operation. Eight of these 10 systems used full-time fixed-route operators for split shifts, and about 31% of these full-time operators worked split shifts. Three of the 10 private fixed-route contractors used part-time fixed-route operators for split shifts, and about 11% of these part-time operators worked split shifts.

Pay Rates

Respondents who indicated that they hired vehicle operators and provided services directly were asked for the training, starting, and maximum pay rates of ADA paratransit vehicle operators. Public entities and private contractors who indicated that they operated fixed-route services in the same area were also asked for similar pay information for fixed-route vehicle operators. Table 3-3 summarizes the information received.

Table 3-3. Vehicle operator pay rates by type of entity and type of service (67 responses total).

	Public Transit Agencies		Private Providers	
	Paratransit Operators	Fixed Route Operators	Paratransit Operators	Fixed Route Operators
Training Wage				
Range	$4.80-$14.19	$5.15-$16.79	$7-$15	$7-$13.69
Average	$9.81	$10.77	$8.93	$9.13
Starting Wage				
Range	$9.50-$15.77	$9-$19.51	$7-$14.06	$8.15-$15.14
Average	$12.06	$12.65	$10.47	$11.39
Maximum Wage				
Range	$11.81-$23.74	$12.27-$24.93	$7.90-$20	$9.15-$19.79
Average	$16.88	$18.59	$14.14	$14.94

As shown in Table 3-3, ADA paratransit vehicle operator *training* wages ranged from $4.80 to $15, while fixed-route vehicle operator *training* wages were slightly higher, ranging from $5.15 to $16.79. Public entities reported slightly higher average training wages ($9.81 average for paratransit and $10.77 average for fixed route) compared to private companies ($8.93 average for paratransit and $9.13 average for fixed route).

ADA paratransit vehicle operator *starting* wages ranged from $7 to $15.77, and fixed-route vehicle operator *starting* wages ranged from $8.15 to $19.51. Public entities reported higher average starting wages ($12.06 average for paratransit and $12.65 average for fixed route) compared to private companies ($10.47 average for paratransit and $11.39 average for fixed route).

ADA paratransit vehicle operator *maximum* wages ranged from $7.90 to $23.74, and fixed-route vehicle operator *maximum* wages ranged from $9.15 to $24.93. Public entities reported higher average maximum wages ($16.88 average for paratransit and $18.59 average for fixed route) compared to private companies ($14.14 average for paratransit and $14.94 average for fixed route).

Use of Pay Differentials

Survey respondents were also asked if they used hourly pay differentials to compensate vehicle operators for "less desirable" work assignments. Respondents were asked if they used pay differentials for part-time work, split shifts, or evening and weekend work assignments. Sixty respondents provided this requested information. This included 21 public transit agencies that operate service directly and 39 private contractors. Table 3-4 shows the responses.

Only eight systems reported using pay differentials—two public transit agencies and six private contractors. The six private contractors indicated that pay differentials were only used in ADA paratransit operations. One of the two public agencies also only used pay differentials for ADA paratransit. The other public agency used pay differentials in both ADA paratransit and fixed-route operations. Only one system used pay differentials for part-time work. And only one system used pay differentials for split shifts. Seven systems used pay differentials for evening and weekend work. One of these seven stated that an extra $1.50 per hour is paid to vehicle operators who work Saturdays and double pay is provided for work on holidays. A second respondent stated that an extra 15% is paid for night work. One respondent who indicated that pay differentials were not currently in use noted, "unions would agree to variable pay rates."

Impact of Wages on Turnover

To determine if there was a relationship between vehicle operator turnover and the amount of wages paid, these two data elements were charted. Figure 3-8 shows the result of this cross-tabulation. Starting wages for ADA paratransit vehicle

Table 3-4. Use of pay differentials by public transit agencies and private contractors.

	Public Transit Agencies	Private Contractors	Total
Total Responses	21	39	60
Use pay differentials for part-time work	1	0	1
Use pay differentials for split shifts	1	0	1
Use pay differentials for evening and weekend work	1	6	7

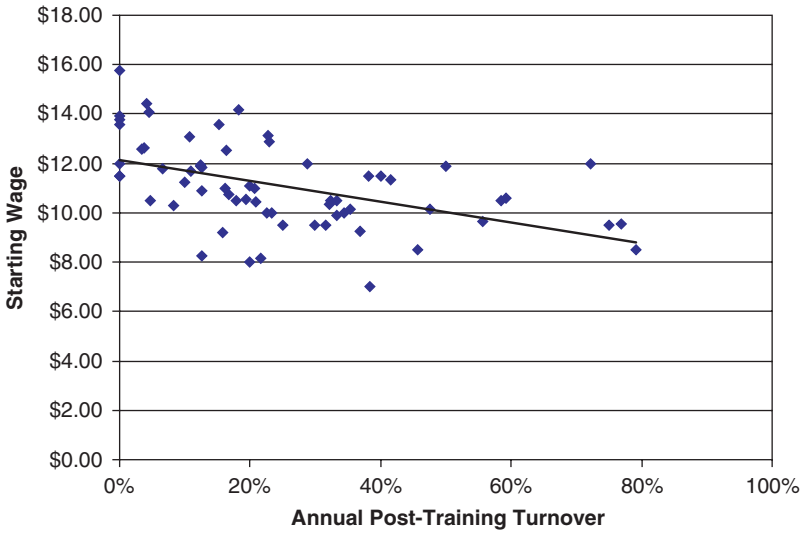


Figure 3-8. Relationship between starting paratransit operator wages and annual post-training turnover.

operators for all respondents (public and private) is shown on the Y-axis. Annual post-training turnover is shown on the X-axis. A linear trend line has also been added.

As shown, there appears to be a general relationship between starting wages and annual turnover. On average, turnover appears to decrease with higher starting wages. There also appears to be significant variation, though, which suggests that while wages do have an impact on turnover, other factors also cause turnover. The relationship between levels of compensation and turnover rates is explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

Union Representation and Impacts on Wages

All respondents who indicated that they employed vehicle operators and operated services directly were asked to indicate whether or not the paratransit vehicle operator workforce was represented by a union. Respondents were asked to indicate if all operators were represented by a union, some were represented by a union, or none were represented by a union. Table 3-5 provides the responses of 71 public agencies and private contractors who answered this question.

As shown in Table 3-5, 45 of the 71 respondents (63%) indicated that all paratransit operators were represented by a union. Union representation of all operators was higher among public agencies—71% of public agency operators were all represented, while 58% of private vehicle operators were represented.

Table 3-5. Paratransit vehicle operator union representation.

		All	Some	None	Total
	Public	20	2	6	28
	Private	25	5	13	43
	Total	45	7	19	71

Another seven respondents (10%) indicated that some paratransit vehicle operators were represented. This included 7% of the public agencies that responded and 12% of the private contractors that responded.

No paratransit operators were represented by a union in 19 of the systems that responded (27%). This included 21% of the public agencies and 30% of the private contractors.

Responses to the question on union representation were cross-tabulated with the information provided on paratransit vehicle operator wages to determine if union representation had an impact on wages. Table 3-6 shows the information from this cross-tabulation. Starting wage information is used in this cross-tabulation. Information is provided separately for public agencies and private contractors to minimize the already known difference in pay rates between public and private agencies.

As shown in Table 3-6, among public agencies, the average starting pay rate was about $1.00 higher for union represented operators than for non-union operators. For private contractors, the difference was more pronounced—$2.15 higher when all operators are part of a union and $1.43 higher even if only some operators are part of a union. The average starting wage in the 20 public systems where all operators were represented was $12.33 while the average starting wage for the 13 private contractors where no operators were part of a union was $9.03. This difference of $3.30 per hour is significant and explains at least some of the difference in annual turnover between public transit agencies and private contrac-

Table 3-6. Impacts on wages of union representation.

	All	Some	None
Public	**20**	**2**	**6**
Wage Range	$9.50 - $15.77	n/a	$9.50 - $12.87
Average Wage	$12.33	n/a	$11.30
Private	**25**	**5**	**13**
Wage Range	$9.21 - $14.06	$9.56 - $11.50	$7 - $10.50
Average Wage	$11.18	$10.46	$9.03
Total	**45**	**7**	**19**

tors. The high required contribution to health care benefits, described in the following sections, is also likely another part of the difference.

Types of Fringe Benefits Provided

Respondents who indicated that they hired vehicle operators and provided services directly were also asked to provide information about certain fringe benefits. This included individual health care coverage, family health care coverage, long-term disability benefits, paid sick leave, and a retirement plan. Information about vacation and holiday benefits was asked in a separate question.

Where the transit agencies or private contractors operated both paratransit and fixed-route services in the same area, fringe benefit information for both types of vehicle operators was requested for comparison.

Table 3-7 shows the number of public transit agencies and private contractors that provided the requested information, as well as the percentage of respondents indicating that they provided each type of benefit to paratransit operators and fixed-route operators. The types of benefits offered to full-time as well as part-time operators are also shown.

As shown, full-time paratransit operators received paid vacations from 81% of the public transit agencies that responded, paid holidays from 100% of the public agencies, individual health care benefits from 70% of the public agencies, family health care benefits from 70% of the public agencies, long-term disability benefits from 39% of the public agencies that responded, paid sick leave from 48% of the public agencies, and retirement benefits from 65% of the public agencies. As might be expected, part-time paratransit operators received these benefits with less frequency. Part-time operators received paid vacations from only 7% of the public transit agencies that responded, paid holidays from 11% of the public agencies, individual health care benefits from 28% of the public agencies, family health care benefits from 22% of the public agencies, long-term disability benefits from 11% of the public agencies, paid sick leave from 22% of the public agencies, and retirement benefits from 33% of the public agencies.

These benefits were offered to fixed-route operators by a similar percentage of the public agencies. Full-time fixed-route operators received paid vacations from 76% of the public transit agencies that responded, paid holidays from 100% of the public agencies, individual health care benefits from 76% of the public agencies, family health care benefits from 76% of the public agencies, long-term disability benefits from 41% of the public agencies, paid sick leave from 53% of the public agencies, and retirement benefits from 76% of the public agencies. None of the public systems provided part-time fixed-route

Table 3-7. Percent of public transit agencies and private contractors providing fringe benefits to full-time and part-time paratransit and fixed-route vehicle operators.

	Public Transit Agencies				Private Contractors			
	Paratransit		Fixed Route		Paratransit		Fixed Route	
	PT[1]	FT[2]	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT
Number of Systems Responding	**18**	**23**	**14**	**17**	**37**	**44**	**7**	**9**
Paid Vacation	7%	81%	0%	76%	27%	68%	14%	67%
Paid Holidays	11%	100%	14%	100%	44%	93%	71%	100%
Individual Health Care	28%	70%	29%	76%	19%	75%	0%	67%
Family Health Care	22%	70%	21%	76%	19%	68%	0%	56%
Long-Term Disability	11%	39%	7%	41%	8%	34%	14%	22%
Paid Sick Leave	22%	48%	14%	53%	27%	54%	14%	56%
Retirement Plan	33%	65%	36%	76%	35%	57%	14%	56%

[1] PT = part-time
[2] FT = full-time

operators with paid vacations. Part-time fixed-route operators received paid holidays from 14% of the public agencies, individual health care benefits from 29% of the public agencies, family health care benefits from 21% of the public agencies, long-term disability benefits from 7% of the public agencies, paid sick leave from 14% of the public agencies, and retirement benefits from 36% of the public agencies.

In most cases, private companies provided these benefits with slightly less frequency—except for part-time paratransit operators, who received certain benefits more often under private contractors. Full-time paratransit operators received paid vacations from 68% of the private contractors that responded, paid holidays from 93% of the private contractors, individual health care benefits from 75% of the private contractors, family health care benefits from 68% of the private contractors, long-term disability benefits from 34% of the private contractors, paid sick leave from 54% of the private contractors, and retirement benefits from 57% of the private contractors. Part-time operators received paid vacations from 27% of the private contractors that responded, paid holidays from 44% of the private contractors, individual health care benefits from 19% of the private contractors, family health care benefits from 19% of the private contractors, long-term disability benefits from 8% of the private contractors, paid sick leave from 27% of the private contractors, and retirement benefits from 35% of the private contractors.

Fixed-route operators working under private contractors did not fare as well in terms of benefits as their public employee counterparts. Full-time fixed-route operators received paid vacations from 67% of the private contractors that responded, paid holidays from 100% of the private companies, individual health care benefits from 67% of the private contractors, family health care benefits from 56%, long-term disability benefits from 22%, paid sick leave from 56%, and retirement benefits from 56%. Part-time fixed-route operators received paid vacations from 14% of the private contractors that responded, paid holidays from 71% of the private contractors, did not receive individual or family health care benefits from any of the private companies that responded, and long-term disability benefits, paid sick leave, and retirement benefits from 14% of the private contractors.

Level of Fringe Benefits Provided

Tables 3-8 and 3-9 provide more detailed information about the level of benefits provided. Table 3-8 shows the number of paid vacation days and holidays provided to full-time and part-time paratransit and fixed-route vehicle operators. Table 3-9 shows the percent contribution required from employees for individual and family health care coverage.

As shown in Table 3-8, few public transit agencies provided paid vacation days to starting part-time paratransit operators—on average, they received about 0.5 days per year. Full-time paratransit operators received, on average, about 5.5 days per year of paid vacation. None of the responding public agencies indicated that starting part-time fixed-route operators receive paid vacations, and starting full-time fixed-route operators received about 5.3 paid vacation days per year. More private contractors provided paid vacation to starting part-time paratransit operators—on average, they received about 1.2 days per year. Private contractors provided an average of 4.0 days per year of paid vacation to starting full-time paratransit operators (slightly lower than public agencies). These same private contractors indicated that few starting part-time fixed-route operators receive paid vacation days—on average, they received only 0.1 paid vacation day per year. Starting full-time fixed-route operators receive about 4.0 paid vacation days (the same as full-time paratransit operators).

It is important to note that several private contractors indicated that vacation time for vehicle operators does not begin

Table 3-8. Days of paid vacation and holidays per year for ADA paratransit and fixed-route vehicle operators, public and private entities.

Days of Vacation and Holidays per Year, by Provider, Service Type, and Employment Status								
	Public Transit Agencies				Private Providers			
	Paratransit Operators		Fixed Route Operators		Paratransit Operators		Fixed Route Operators	
	23 Responses Received		*17 Responses Received*		*44 Responses Received*		*9 Responses Received*	
	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time
Starting Vacation								
Range	0-7	1 - 12	n/a	1 - 12	1 - 12	1 - 12	0-1	1 -15
Average	0.5	5.5	0.0	5.3	1.2	4.0	0.1	4.0
Maximum Vacation								
Range	0-15	0-25	0-6	0-30	0-25	0-25	0-5	5 to 25
Average	1.4	15.8	0.5	18.4	3.1	15.2	0.7	14.4
Holidays								
Range	0-8	0-13	0-9	6 - 12	0-11	0-11	0-8	6-9
Average	0.9	9.2	0.9	9.8	3.2	6.9	4.0	7.0

Table 3-9. Percent of vehicle operator contribution to total health care premium, ADA paratransit and fixed-route vehicle operators, public and private entities.

	Public Transit Agencies		Private Providers	
	Paratransit Operators	Fixed Route Operators	Paratransit Operators	Fixed Route Operators
	20 Responses	*19 Responses*	*37 Responses*	*9 Responses*
Individual Coverage				
Range	0 - 30%	0 - 30%	0 - 100%	0 - 100%
Average	9.7%	9.8%	33%	30%
Family Coverage				
Range	0 - 65%	0 - 30%	0 - 100%	0 - 99%
Average	18%	12%	50%	39%

accruing immediately. In some cases, it was noted that vacation time starts to accrue after a 6-month period of employment. In other cases, it was noted that time does not accrue until the beginning of the second year of employment. The "starting" vacation time indicated could therefore be overstated for private companies. In some cases, the days per year indicated might actually not be available for several months, or in a few cases, up to one year after the start date.

The maximum amount of paid vacation time that could be earned by part-time operators was better under private contractors, while maximum paid vacation for full-time operators was slightly better under public agencies. Public transit agencies indicated that, on average, part-time paratransit operators could earn a maximum of 1.4 paid vacation days per year, and full-time paratransit operators could earn up to 15.8 days per year of paid vacation. These same public agencies indicated that part-time fixed-route operators could earn a maximum of 0.5 days of vacation, on average, and full-time fixed-route operators could earn up to 18.4 paid vacation days (about 2.6 days per year higher than paratransit operators). Private contractors indicated that, on average, part-time paratransit operators could earn a maximum of 3.1 paid vacation days per year, and full-time paratransit operators could earn up to 15.2 days per year of paid vacation. These same private contractors indicated that part-time fixed-route operators could earn a maximum of 0.7 days of vacation, on average, and full-time fixed-route operators could earn up to 14.4 paid vacation days.

Relatively good holiday benefits were provided by public agencies to full-time operators, but part-time public operators typically received few paid holiday benefits. On average, full-time paratransit operators receive 9.2 days of paid vacation and full-time fixed-route operators receive 9.8 paid holidays. Public agencies provided part-time paratransit and fixed-route operators less than one paid holiday per year, on average.

Private contractors had better holiday benefits for part-timers but slightly lower holiday benefits for full-time operators. On average, part-time paratransit operators receive 3.2 paid holidays per year, and part-time fixed-route operators receive 4.0 paid holidays per year. Full-time paratransit operators receive 6.9 holidays, on average, and full-time fixed-route operators receive 7.0 paid holidays per year from private contractors.

Table 3-9 provides information on the contributions required by vehicle operators toward agency or company health care plans. As shown, contributions required by private contractors are significantly higher than those required by public transit agencies. On average, paratransit operators employed by public transit agencies contribute about 9.7% of the cost of individual health care, while their fixed-route counterparts contribute a similar amount (9.8%). Public paratransit operators contribute an average of 18% toward family health care, while their fixed-route counterparts are required to contribute only 12% on average.

Paratransit operators employed by private contractors, on the other hand, are required to pay about 33% of the cost of individual health care, and their fixed-route counterparts pay about 30%. Paratransit operators at private contractors pay an average of 50% toward family health care coverage, and their fixed-route counterparts pay an average of 39% for family coverage. Given that the typical family health care plan can run $1,000 per month or more, this type of coverage would typically not be affordable to most paratransit operators. Even the 33% of individual coverage would consume a significant portion of their monthly take-home pay.

Relationship Between Paratransit and Fixed-Route Workforces

Where survey respondents indicated that they directly operated both ADA paratransit service and fixed-route service in the same area, information about the relationship between the two workforces was requested. Specifically, the survey asked respondents to indicate if one or more of the following situations existed:

- Paratransit and fixed-route operators are paid the same wage and all operators can work in either type of service.

- Paratransit and fixed-route operators are hired and managed separately and there is little crossover between the two groups.
- Vehicle operators are typically hired first for paratransit and then can move to fixed-route if there is an opening—but this relationship *has not* resulted in significant turnover problems for paratransit.
- Vehicle operators are typically hired first for paratransit and then can move to fixed-route if there is an opening—and this relationship *has* resulted in significant turnover problems for paratransit.

Respondents were also given a "Not Sure" option in each case, as well as an "Other" option with the chance to provide comments on this topic. The responses received are summarized in Table 3-10.

Twenty-two public transit agencies and 10 private contractors indicated that they operated both types of service and responded to this question. Ten of the 22 public transit agencies that operate both fixed-route and paratransit (45%) indicated that the workforces are paid the same wage and can move between both types of services. Seven (32%) indicated that the workforces are separate and there is no cross-over. Three (14%) indicated that operators are hired first for paratransit and can then move to fixed route when openings become available, but that this relationship did not have a significant impact on paratransit operator turnover. None of the 22 public transit agencies selected the response that movement between the two workforces caused significant paratransit turnover, although one respondent checked "Other" and added the following comment:

> As part of our union contract paratransit operators have transfer rights after two years. We do not hire fixed-route operators off the street therefore paratransit operators must be hired and trained first then existing paratransit operators are transferred into fixed route. This is a continual training cost and recruitment problem.

This comment does suggest movement between paratransit and fixed route that creates turnover problems in paratransit for this one respondent.

The final public transit agency checked "Other" and commented:

> We hire operators and train them for fixed route first. We train and fill open runs in Paratransit as they become available.

Table 3-10. Relationship between ADA paratransit and fixed-route operator workforces where both types of service are provided by the respondent.

Relationship Between Paratransit and Fixed-Route Operators		Public	Private	Total
Same Pay Scale	All vehicle operators are at the same pay scale and can work on either fixed route or paratransit.	10	4	14
No Crossover Between Operators	Paratransit and fixed route vehicle operators are hired and managed separately. There is little crossover between the two groups.	7	4	11
No Significant Turnover	Vehicle operators are typically hired first for paratransit and then can move to fixed route if there is an opening. Movement between paratransit and fixed route HAS NOT created a significant turnover problem for paratransit, though.	3	1	4
Significant Turnover	Vehicle operators are typically hired first for paratransit and then move to fixed route if there is an opening. Movement between paratransit and fixed route HAS created a significant turnover issue for paratransit.	0	0	0
Not Sure		0	0	0
Other Comment Provided		2	1	3

Four of the 10 private contractors that operate both fixed-route and paratransit (40%) services indicated that the workforces are paid the same wage and can move between both types of services. Another four (40%) indicated that the workforces are separate and there is no cross-over. One (10%) indicated that operators are hired first for paratransit and can then move to fixed route when openings become available, but this relationship does not have a significant impact on paratransit operator turnover. None of the 10 private contractors selected the response that movement between the two workforces caused significant paratransit turnover. One private contractor indicated "Other" and provided the following comment:

> Operators frequently do both services and are able to cross over as openings occur. We have found that paratransit operators enjoy more diversity in their jobs and are willing to accept lower pay for the greater variety and job satisfaction that they receive. There is little movement between the services.

This "Other" response was from MV Transportation's operation in the Monterey-Salinas, California, area. This MV operation reported relatively little wage differential (a $10.54 starting wage for paratransit operators and an $11.04 starting wage for fixed-route operators) and only a 19% annual turnover among paratransit operators.

Equalizing Pay Between Modes

Respondents who indicated that they employed both paratransit and fixed-route operators and provide both types of service in the same area were asked for wage information for both modes. If there was a pay differential between paratransit and fixed route, they were then asked if they were moving toward equalizing pay for both types of operators. They were then asked for comments on why they were or were not moving toward equal pay. Responses are provided in Table 3-11 and explained in further detail in the following text.

Twenty-seven of the public and private entities that indicated they directly operate both fixed-route and paratransit services responded to the question about wage information—19 were public transit agencies and 8 were private contractors. Overall, 17 of the 27 respondents to this question (63%) indicated that pay between the modes was already equal, and another three (11%) were moving toward equal pay. Only 7 of the 27 respondents (26%) did not have equal pay and were not moving in that direction.

Twelve of the 19 public transit agencies that directly operate both types of services (63%) indicated that there is equal pay between the workforces. Another two (10%) said they were working toward equalizing pay. Five (26%) said they were not moving toward equal pay. In the two systems where equal pay was a goal, there was an average starting pay difference of $2.54 between fixed route and paratransit. In the five systems that were not moving toward equal pay, the difference in starting pay between the modes was similar ($2.48) but the average paratransit wage was relatively high ($12.13).

Five of the eight private contractors (62%) that operated both types of service and responded to this question indicated that pay between the workforces was equal. One additional private contractor indicated that it was moving toward equal pay. Two private contractors (25%) said they were not moving to equal pay. In these two cases, the average paratransit starting wage was again relatively high ($12.05) and the difference in starting wage between paratransit and fixed route was only 32 cents.

More detailed information about the experiences of systems that have integrated ADA paratransit and fixed-route vehicle operator workforces and/or equalized pay is presented in Chapter 9.

Factors That Impact Vehicle Operator Recruitment

Survey respondents were given a list of possible factors that impact ADA paratransit operator recruitment. They were asked to indicate if, in their experience, the factors had "No Impact", "Little Impact," "Some Impact," "Moderate Impact," or "Significant Impact" on recruitment. Figure 3-9 shows the ratings given. The figure was created by translating all "No Impact" responses to a "1" rating, all "Little Impact"

Table 3-11. Movement toward equal pay by respondents that directly operate both fixed-route and paratransit services.

	Equal Pay	Moving Toward Equal Pay		No Moving Toward Equal Pay	
		Paratransit	Fixed Route	Paratransit	Fixed Route
Public	**12**	**2**		**5**	
Wage Range		$11.23 - $12	$13.68 - $14.63	$9.50 - $14.41	$11.40 - $19.51
Average Wage	n/a	$11.62	$14.16	$12.13	$14.61
Private	**5**	**1**		**2**	
Wage Range				$10. 54 - $13.55	$11.04 - $13.69
Average Wage	n/a	n/a		$12.05	$12.37
Total	**17**	**3**		**7**	

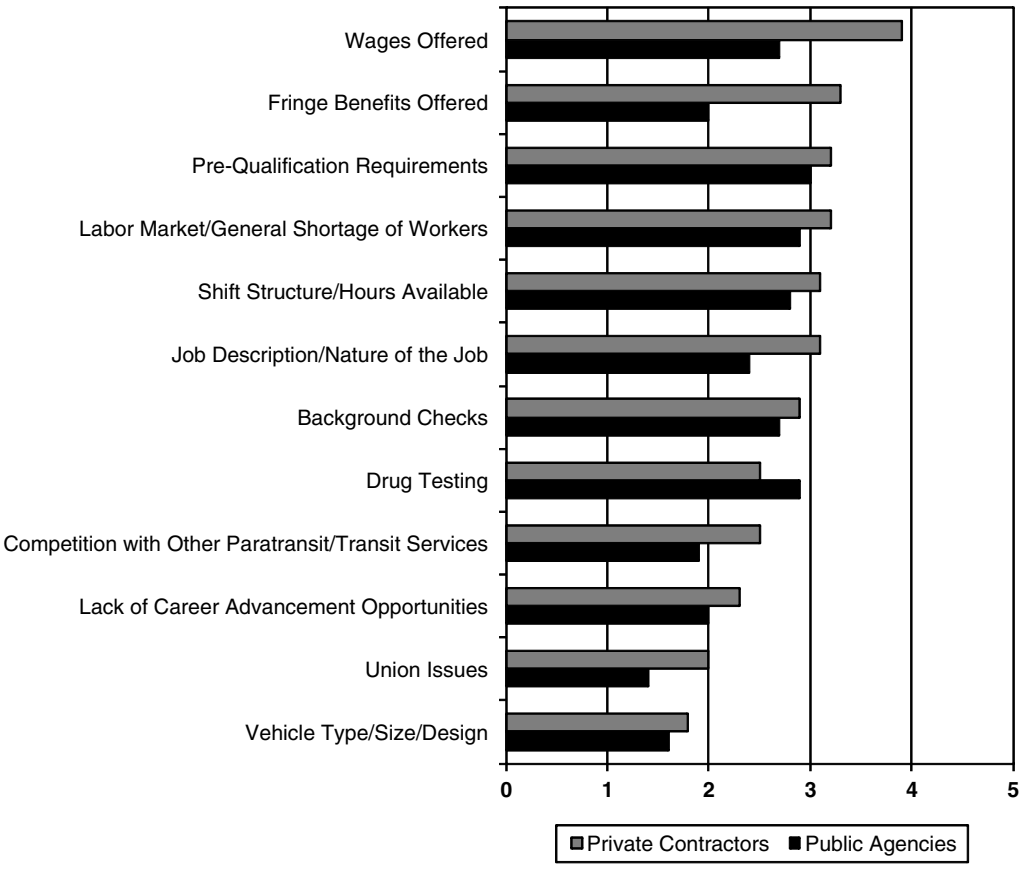


Figure 3-9. Factors that impact vehicle operator recruitment.

responses to a "2," and so on up to "Significant Impact" being a "5." Responses were then averaged for all public agency respondents and all private contractor responses.

As shown, public transit agencies indicated that pre-qualification requirements (such as minimum age, CDL licenses, background checks, etc.) had the most impact on their recruitment of paratransit operators (3 out of 5). Also rated as influential were general labor market conditions (2.9 out of 5), drug testing requirements (2.9 out of 5), shift structure and hours available (2.8 out of 5), background checks (2.7 out of 5), wages offered (2.7 out of 5), and the nature of the job (2.4 out of 5). No other factor rated higher, on average, than a 2.0.

Private contractors, on the other hand, considered the wages being offered as the factor that most impacted recruitment (3.9 out of 5). Fringe benefits were rated second most significant (3.3 out of 5). Other issues that had high ratings in terms of impacts on recruitment were the general labor market (3.2 out of 5), pre-qualification requirements (3.2 out of 5), and background checks (2.9 out of 5). Other factors rated 2.5 or below.

This question also included an "Other" option with respondents asked to identify any other factors that impacted recruitment that were not on the list. Four respondents offered recruitment factors not on the list or expounded on items on the list. These comments were the following:

- "We only hire part-time operators; therefore folks leave if they can get a full-time position with benefits."
- "Starting wages are too low to attract experienced operators. Operators reach prevailing wage with overtime, but the union structure provides a fixed starting wage and we cannot adjust for special case operators that have experience."
- "Workers comp is a significant impact as we have several operators out of service at any given time."
- "North Carolina does not allow a union to collectively bargain with local government; however, a union has recently been organizing paratransit operators. This union, however, has had no impact on working conditions, pay, etc., because they cannot collectively bargain. The union has lowered morale of operators by making promises they have not been able to keep. The union also encourages grievances and EEOC complaints, but all grievances and EEOC complaints have been lost by the employees who filed them."

It is interesting to note that the second comment, which cited starting wages that were too low to attract experienced

operators, was from a system that reported a $9 starting wage for sedan operators and a $10 starting wage for van operators.

Efforts Made to Improve Recruitment

Respondents were asked to indicate what types of efforts had been made to improve the recruitment of ADA paratransit operators. A list of 13 types of efforts identified in the research were listed and respondents were asked to indicate if these efforts were "Not Used" (coded as a "1"), "Used with Little Success" (coded as a "2"), "Used with Some Success" (coded as a "3"), or "Used with Good Success" (coded as a "4"). Figure 3-10 shows the responses to this question. Separate responses are reported for public agencies and private contractors.

As shown in Figure 3-10, public agencies reported greatest use and success with paid training, which on average was rated 3.5. No other type of effort rated above 3.0 on average. Providing uniforms rated second (2.5), followed by increased hourly wages (2.1). Targeted advertising, use of job fairs, performance/recognition and awards/payments, and GPS and other technologies that assist with the job were all rated a 2.0 out of 4.0.

Private contractors also rated paid training as the type of effort that provided the greatest success, with an average 3.0 rating. Second was providing uniforms (2.7), followed by targeted advertising (2.5), increased hourly wages, and performance/recognition awards/payments which both received a 2.3. Referral bonuses paid to other employees and advertising in non-traditional ways were both rated a

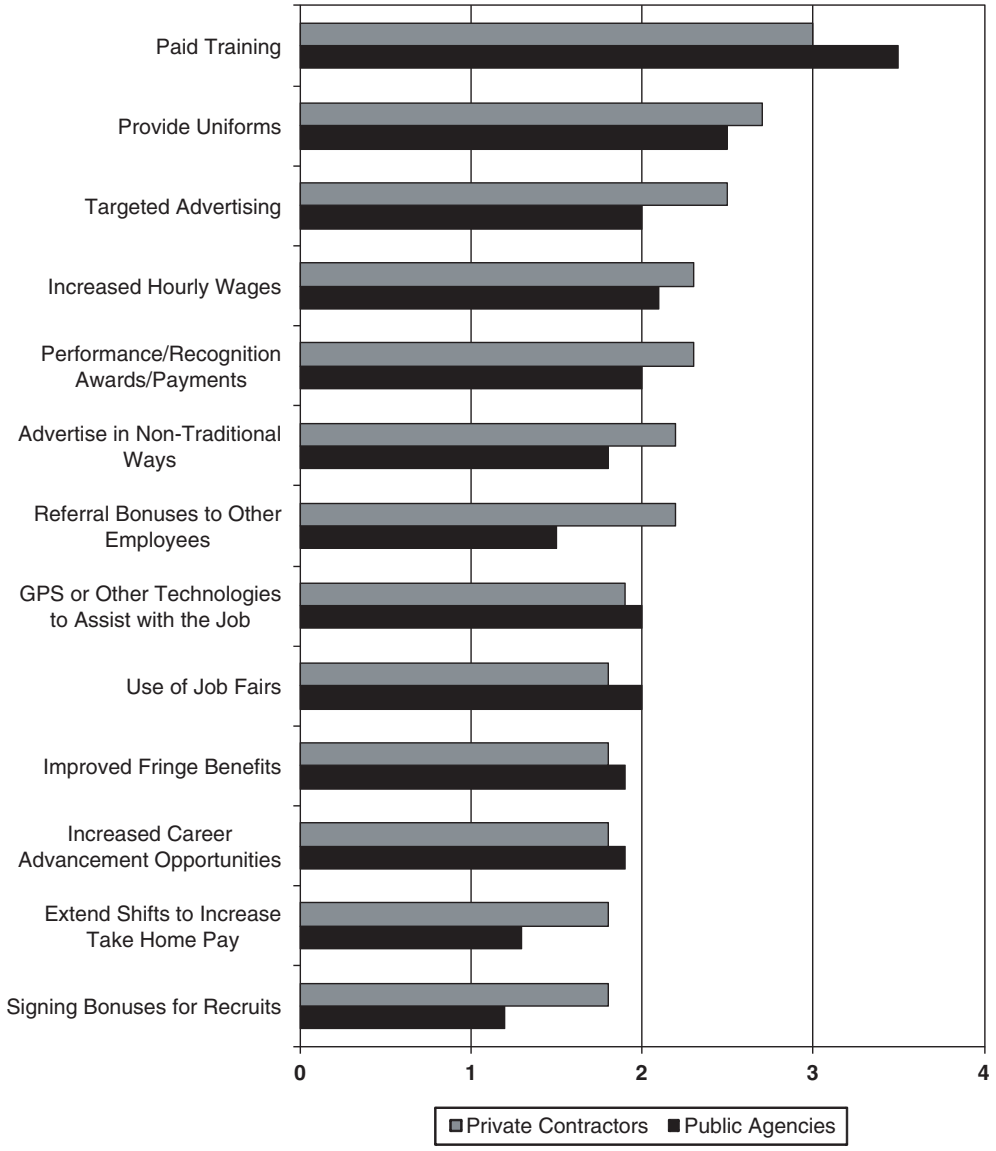


Figure 3-10. Efforts made to improve recruitment.

2.2 on average. No other type of effort rated above a 2.0 with private contractors.

Five respondents offered "Other" comments on this question. These comments were the following:

- "All types of advertising and job fairs have been used. However, when applicants are polled, these advertisements have not been the reason that individuals applied. Most applicants come through word of mouth, by seeing our vehicles on the road, and by reviewing the City's vacancy listings."
- "Operators really appreciate the one-on-one time (referring to training). Our classes are small and they do get a lot of attention during those first weeks."
- "Regular safety meetings, improved vehicle reliability."
- "Overtime is available and many operators work extra shifts or extended hours. This is more a need of the service due to increased demand than a perk to attract operators, but it may have the same effect."
- "A poor economy helps."

Respondents who indicated that they had used one or more approaches with good success were also asked to expound on these successful efforts. The following comments were provided:

- "The quality of applicants has not been up to par with the applicants who came in a decade ago. Getting a job with the City was an attractive option to many people. Even with the benefits and retirement programs we have in place, we are not attracting the quality of applicants we would like to see. Our operators require CDLs and other opportunities for CDL holders in this area pay more."
- "Clothes don't get damaged—nobody's competing for best wardrobe. They save money because they don't have to buy special clothes with their money." (This comment was related to efforts to provide uniforms.)
- "We offer paid training for all employees. We advertised by media, internet, on bus benches and traveling signs on MTA vehicles. We attend all job fairs. The hourly rates are raised in Union negotiation. All employees that go above and beyond the call of duty are recognized! The company looks within the company when a position comes open to their employees first! All uniforms are provided by the company!"
- "We have always provided paid training so there is nothing to compare it to."
- "A uniform consisting of shirts, jacket, hat and an Identification Badge are worn by operators. This is a professional service and identification as a professional is important. This helps build team support and operator pride in the service they offer to people with disabilities."
- "We have good operators and they refer good operators. Our referral is $100 after trainee gets out of 4 month probation and $100 if both employees are here when person referred has been here one year."
- "The trainees are often concerned about the $7.00 training pay until they are informed of a $250 signing bonus if they stay for three months; the amount offered offsets the $7.00 training pay by adding another $3.00 an hour for training. Of course, when we increase the starting pay, we also see an increase in trainees/applicants."
- "Job fairs—people are actively looking for a job. Attend fairs that target transportation, attend fairs for people 50 and over. Advertising non-traditional bumper sticker on the bus that have phone # and says looking for operators."
- "We offer paid training. This appeals to a lot of applicants because many ADA paratransit providers in this area don't. We also provide uniforms to the operators and a cleaning service as well. Applicants like the fact they don't have to have their uniforms cleaned themselves. We also have an incentive program for employees."
- "Referral Bonus of $300.00 is paid to existing employees if both existing employee and referred employee are still employed after six months."
- "All vehicle operators understand that they are consistently being evaluated for career advancement. The advancements will involve becoming an office staff employee. More than 75% of our office staff are former vehicle operators."
- "Over the past two years, we have increased wages and benefits by over 10%. This has helped with retention efforts with some impact to recruitment efforts. Minimum wage increases have ultimately closed the gaps in wages for positions that require higher levels of responsibilities."
- "Since the work is hard, you need to provide a reward system to appreciate the work force. We implemented this type of system over the past two years and have had good results. We target applicants and we only look for career oriented people."
- "Everyone wants more money. Paratransit operators have never been paid adequately for the service they provide. It's the most important transit service provided and the group providing the endless hours of service to people who REALLY need the service are not even recognized or rewarded adequately. Uniforms are a minimal perk. They don't have to spend money on clothes. They barely make enough to eat and feed their family. Unless of course they do overtime."
- "Uniforms are union contract issued."

Responses were also tabulated, rather than averaged, in order to get a better sense of how many respondents had tried each recruitment effort and the relative success of each type

Table 3-12. Success with efforts to improve recruitment.

Recruitment Efforts	Not Used	Used with Little Success	Used with Some Success	Used with Good Success	% That Have Tried	% Tried with Some or Good Success	% Tried with Good Success
Signing bonuses for recruits	42	7	14	1	34%	68%	5%
Referral bonus paid to other employees	26	19	15	4	59%	50%	11%
Paid training	2	8	31	22	97%	87%	36%
Targeted advertising	17	13	30	4	73%	72%	9%
Advertising in non-traditional ways	23	16	21	4	64%	61%	10%
Use of job fairs	24	27	11	2	63%	33%	5%
Increased hourly wages	24	8	21	10	62%	79%	26%
Improved fringe benefits offered	31	13	15	3	50%	58%	10%
Extended shifts to increase total take home pay	42	7	11	3	33%	67%	14%
Provide performance/ recognition awards/payments	21	13	22	7	67%	69%	17%
Increased career advancement opportunities	30	16	13	3	52%	50%	9%
GPS or other technologies to assist with the job	29	13	16	5	54%	62%	15%
Provide uniforms	6	23	22	12	90%	60%	21%

of effort. Table 3-12 shows this tabulation. The last three columns of Table 3-12 also indicate the percent of all respondents that indicated they had tried each type of recruitment effort, the percent of those who had tried each effort that reported some or good success, and the percent of those who indicated trying each effort who reported good success.

As shown in Table 3-12, 97% of all respondents have used paid training as a way to improve recruitment and 90% provide uniforms. Seventy-three percent (73%) reported the use of targeted advertising, and 67% provide performance/ recognition awards/payments. More than half of all respondents also reported using the other listed efforts—with the exception of signing bonuses for recruits (used by only 34% of respondents) and extended shifts to increase take home pay (used by 33%).

Of those who reported having tried each effort, the greatest success was reported with paid training (36% good success and 87% some or good success). Relative success was also reported with increasing wages (26% had good success and 79% reported some or good success). Providing uniforms was also reported to be helpful (21% had good success and 60% reported some or good success). Less than 18% of those who tried each reported "good success" with other efforts. However, some level of success was reported for several other efforts. Over two-thirds of respondents who had tried other efforts reported "some or good success" with signing bonuses for recruits (68%), targeted advertising (72%), extending shifts to increase total take home pay (67%), and performance recognition awards/payments (69%). Half or more of respondents reported some level of success with each of the other efforts—with the exception of job fairs, which were reported to be used with "some or good success" by only 33% of those who had tried this approach to recruitment.

Factors That Impact Vehicle Operator Retention

Survey respondents were also given a list of possible factors that impact ADA paratransit operator retention. They were asked to indicate if, in their experience, the factors had "No Impact", "Little Impact," "Some Impact," "Moderate Impact," or "Significant Impact" on retention. Figure 3-11 shows the ratings given to each factor. The figure was created by translating all "No Impact" responses to a "1" rating, "Little Impact" responses to a "2," and so on up to "Significant Impact" being a "5." Responses were then averaged separately for all public agency respondents and all private contractors.

As shown in Figure 3-11, public agencies that operated ADA paratransit services in-house indicated that dissatisfaction with the work shifts assigned was the biggest issue with

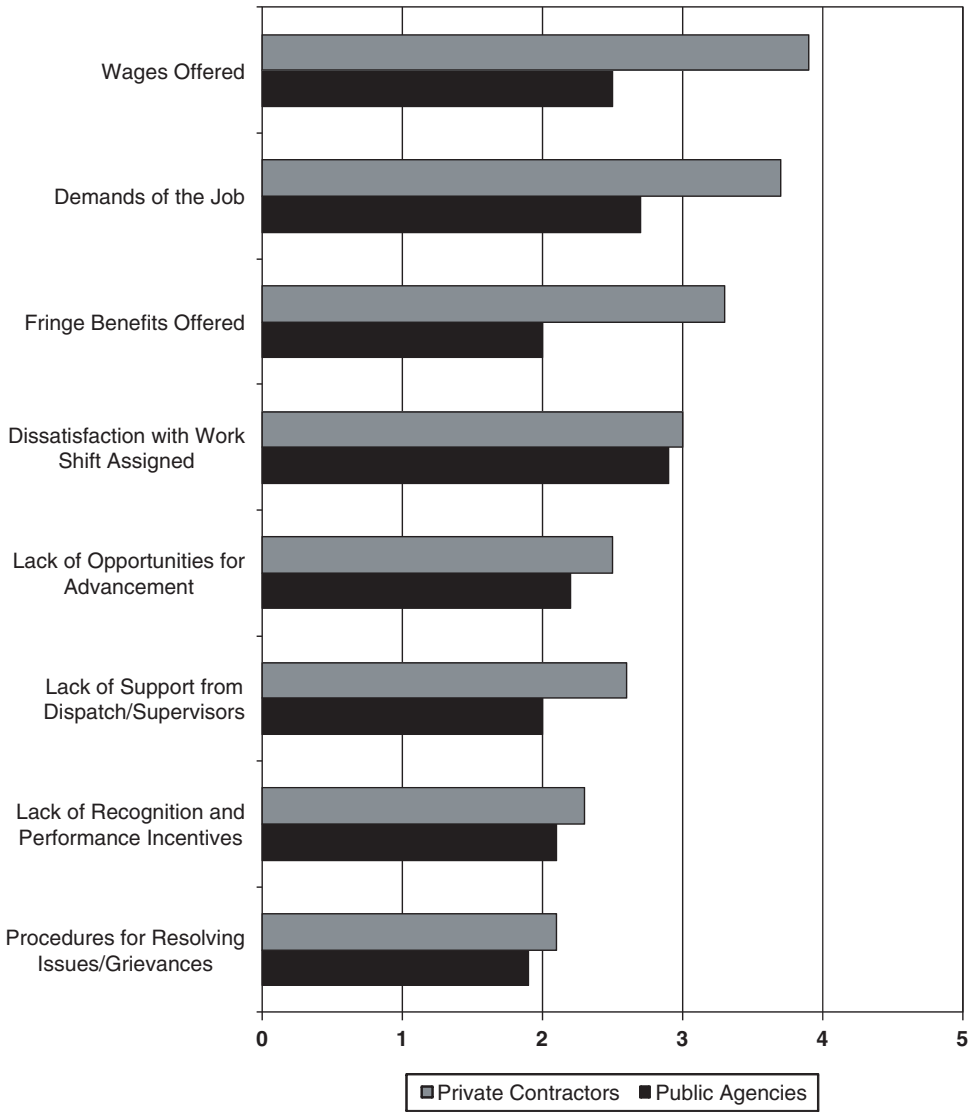


Figure 3-11. Factors that impact vehicle operator retention.

retention (2.9 of 5 rating), followed by demands of the job (2.7). Wages had an average rating of 2.5, followed by lack of opportunities for advancement at 2.2, and lack of recognition and performance incentives at 2.1.

Private contractors indicated, on average, that wages were the most significant issue affecting retention (3.9 out of 5). The demands of the job were second for private contractors (3.7), followed by poor fringe benefits (3.3), and dissatisfaction with the work shifts assigned (3.0). Lack of dispatch support rated an average of 2.6, lack of opportunities for advancement rated an average of 2.5, and lack of recognition and performance incentives rated an average of 2.3. Procedures for resolving operator issues rated 2.1 on average.

This question also included an "Other" option with respondents asked to identify any other factors that impacted retention that were not on the list. The following was the only comment that was received:

> Paratransit operators are paid considerably less than fixed-route operators and light rail operators. They feel that being a paratransit operator is more physically and mentally demanding than bus or rail and that they are not recognized financially for the level of service they provide.

Efforts Made To Improve Retention

Respondents were asked to indicate what types of efforts had been made to improve the retention of ADA paratransit operators. A list of 17 types of efforts identified in the research were listed and respondents were asked to indicate if these efforts were "Not Used" (coded as a "1"), "Used with Little Success" (coded as a "2"), "Used with Some Success" (coded as a "3"),

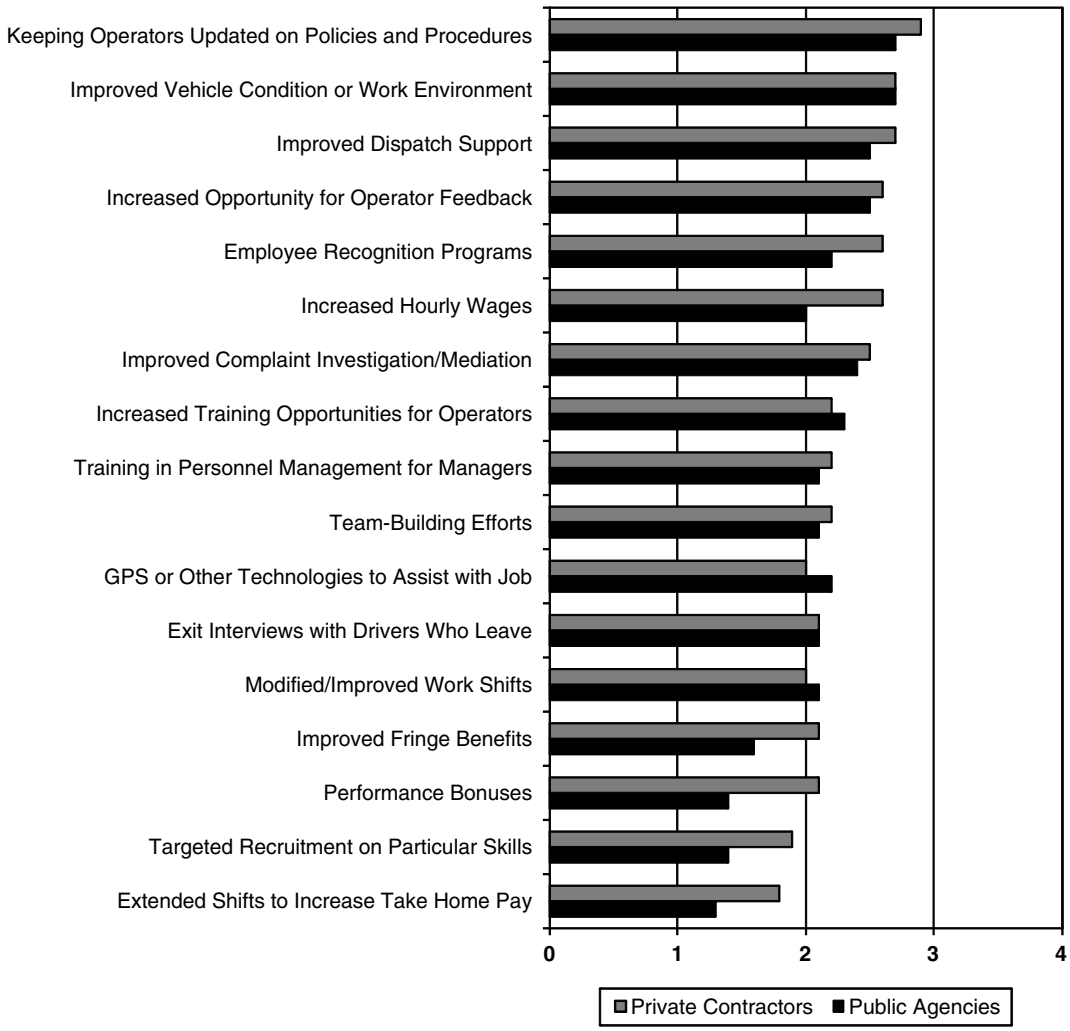


Figure 3-12. Efforts made to improve retention.

or "Used with Good Success" (coded as a "4"). Figure 3-12 shows the responses to this question.

Public agencies indicated that keeping operators updated on policies and procedures, and improving vehicle condition and working conditions were the two things that had been most successful in improving retention (both rated 2.7 out of 5.0). Increased opportunities for operator feedback and improved dispatch support were rated second (both at 2.5). Improved complaint investigation/mediation was rated third (2.4) followed by increased training opportunities (2.3). Employee recognition programs and GPS and other technologies to assist with the job were rated fifth (both at 2.2). Team-building, modified/improved operator work shifts, training in personnel management for managers, and exit interviews with operators who leave voluntarily all rated 2.1.

Interestingly, increased wages and better fringe benefits were not identified by public agencies as strategies that had been used with success to improve retention. This could be due to the fact that, as noted earlier, many public agencies already pay more competitive wages and have good benefits, particularly health care benefits, for paratransit operators involved in in-house operations.

It is also interesting to note that while public entities rated dissatisfaction with work shifts as the top issue in retention (see Figure 3-11) many appear to have not done much to address this issue—as evidenced by the rating of only 2.1 in efforts undertaken.

Private contractors rated "keeping operators updated on policies and procedures" as the type of effort that provided the greatest success, and it received an average rating of 2.9. Tied for second were improved dispatch support and improved vehicle condition and work environment (both with a 2.7 rating). Increased opportunities for operator feedback, employee recognition programs, and increased wages were third at 2.6. Improved complaint investigation/mediation ranked

fourth with a 2.5 average rating. Team-building efforts, increased training opportunities, and training in personnel management for managers all were rated at 2.2.

Respondents who indicated that they had used one or more approach with good success were also asked to expound on these successful efforts. The following comments were provided:

- "We use GPS devices for new operators which has worked well, but remove them after a while so as not to allow their use as a crutch. We use operator surveys for placement of equipment like cupholders, storage bins in vehicle specifications. We are exploring a 4 day 10 hour work schedule, and a 36 hour work week. We are having meetings with operators to allow them to give input."
- "All policies are posted 48 hours before policy changes, or updates! Have extended the training in dispatch to better serve the operators. Have added new vehicles to our fleet in the past couple of years!"
- "Team building very important for us. Operators are all on same radio frequency and this keeps each informed on how the day is going. They are always willing to help out dispatch with a request or an operator that is running late, lost, having a loading problem or experiencing a mechanical vehicle problem. Operator feedback is always requested. By having a common lounge for checking in and out, there is a chance for exchange with office, mechanic and other operators. Client notes that would help other operators are added to operator daily roster. Mechanical status of vans is always welcomed from the operators with most giving it directly to the mechanic."
- "Although all employees have yearly scheduled wage increases of at least $1.00, we have also given pay incentives to operators who exhibit exemplary work behavior."
- "We do target applicants with home health care experience, care giver experience, come from health fields—they tend to have better people skills, familiar with people with disabilities, they have better communication skills. Operators enjoy new equipment and equipment that is well maintained."
- "All manager interviews with operators for policy infractions are held with a union shop steward present. We are sending new hires out with GPS units. The initial stress of learning the area is reduced and operators become productive faster. There have been fewer frustration and resignations by new operators."
- "Communication between operators, dispatchers and management is key to retaining employees. It shows the operators count, management and dispatchers care. Issue to a system can only be resolved and/or explained if dispatch and management is aware and willing to correct them. Management needs to provide tools and resources to all employees for them to achieve to the best of their abilities."
- "Operators appreciate the fact that they are provided quality, reliable equipment to complete their work assignments. Our company has focused much of its attention on providing the operators with quality vehicles."
- "Very little additional information is needed here. Improving wage scales and benefits seem to be the negative impact on retaining as well as recruitment efforts."
- "We have very good fringe benefits."
- "Each time there is a procedural or policy change, a copy of the document is provided to each operator and they sign-off for receipt of the document. This allows them to be current with all issues that are part of the system."
- "We experienced a drop in our turnover rate for the six month period after a $1/hour wage increase."

Responses to success with retention efforts were also tabulated, rather than averaged, in order to get a better sense of how many respondents had tried each retention effort and the relative success of each type of effort. Table 3-13 shows this tabulation. The last three columns of Table 3-13 also indicate the percent of all respondents that indicated they had tried each type of retention effort, the percent of those who had tried each effort that reported some or good success, and the percent of those who indicated trying each effort who reported good success.

As shown, almost all (95%) of respondents indicated that they keep operators updated on policies and procedures as a way of encouraging them to stay. A very high percentage of respondents (80%+) reported using employee recognition programs, increased opportunities for feedback, improved complaint investigation/mediation, improved dispatch support, improved vehicle condition and general work environment, increased training opportunities, and exit interviews with operators who leave as ways to try to reduce turnover. Over half of all respondents reported using the other retention efforts listed—with the exceptions of targeted recruitment on particular applicant skills (only 46%), performance bonuses (only 48%), and extended shifts to increase total take-home pay (only 34%).

Of those who reported having tried each effort, the greatest success was reported with increased hourly wages (22% had good success, and 72% had some or good success). A relatively high rate of "good success" was also reported with GPS or other technologies that can assist with the job (21%) and improved vehicle condition and general work environment (20%). No other effort was reported to have resulted in "good success" by more than 20% of respondents, although improving fringe benefits (15%), improving dispatch support (15%), extended shifts to increase total take home pay (14%), and keeping operators updated on policies and procedures (13%)

Table 3-13. Success with efforts to improve retention.

Retention Efforts	Not Used	Used with Little Success	Used with Some Success	Used with Good Success	% That Have Tried	% Tried with Some or Good Success	% Tried with Good Success
Targeted recruitment on particular applicant skills	34	13	15	1	46%	55%	3%
Performance bonuses	33	12	16	3	48%	61%	10%
Employee recognition Programs	11	16	34	3	83%	70%	6%
Team-building efforts	17	22	21	4	73%	53%	9%
Increased opportunities for operator feedback	8	14	38	4	88%	75%	7%
Improved complaint investigation/mediation	9	20	32	3	86%	64%	5%
Keeping operators updated on policies and procedures	3	15	38	8	95%	75%	13%
Improved dispatch support	9	15	32	8	86%	73%	15%
GPS or other technologies to assist with the job	30	7	20	7	53%	79%	21%
Improved vehicle condition and/or work environm ent	9	13	30	11	86%	76%	20%
Modified/improved operator work shifts	25	12	23	3	60%	68%	8%
Increased training opportunities for operators	13	23	27	1	80%	55%	2%
Training in personnel management for managers	19	17	27	1	70%	62%	2%
Increased hourly wages	18	13	23	10	72%	72%	22%
Improved fringe benefits offered	30	14	15	5	53%	59%	15%
Extended shifts to increase total take-home pay	42	6	13	3	34%	73%	14%
Exit interviews with operators who voluntarily leave	13	33	16	2	80%	35%	4%

was reported to have resulted in good success by more than 10% of respondents who tried each.

Some level of success was reported with several other efforts. Over two-thirds of respondents who had tried other efforts reported "some or good success" with employee recognition programs (70%), increased opportunities for operator feedback (75%), updating operators on policies and procedures (75%), improved dispatch support (73%), GPS and other technologies to assist with the job (79%), improved vehicle condition and work environment (76%), modified/improved work shifts (68%), increased hourly wages (72%), and extended shifts to increase total take home pay (73%). More than half of respondents who had tried other efforts also reported some level of success—with the exception of exit interviews (35%)—which respondents probably felt shed light on retention problems but did not actually improve retention without other actions.

Innovative Procurement Strategies

Public transit agencies that completed the survey and who indicated that they contracted out for some or all of their ADA paratransit service were asked to indicate if they had employed innovative procurement to ensure a full paratransit vehicle operator workforce. Five types of procurement strategies were listed, and respondents were asked to indicate if each of these strategies was "Not Used," "Used with Little Impact," "Used with Some Impact," "Used with Moderate Impact," or "Used with Significant Impact." Respondents were also asked to indicate any other types of procurement strategies that were not on the list and to describe these strategies. Finally, if respondents indicated that they used any one of the listed strategies with some, moderate, or significant impact, they were asked to provide additional information on these efforts.

Table 3-14. Success with innovative procurement strategies.

Procurement Strategy	Not Used	Used with Little Success	Used with Some Success	Used with Moderate Success	Used with Good Success	% That Have Tried	% Tried with Some Moderate or Good Success	% Tried with Good Success
Included language in the RFP indicating that a stable, experienced vehicle operator workforce was expected	11	6	8	6	4	69%	75%	17%
Assigned points in the evaluation process on whether the proposal would provide a stable, experienced vehicle operator workforce	15	4	6	6	2	55%	78%	11%
Set a goal for maximum vehicle operator turnover	33	1	1	0	0	6%	50%	0%
Included "living wage" or other minimum wage standards in the RFP	22	4	3	4	2	37%	69%	15%
Included incentives and/or penalties in the contract related to maintaining an adequate vehicle operator workforce or covering all runs assigned	14	5	6	3	7	60%	76%	33%

Table 3-14 shows the responses to whether public entities had used one of the listed procurement approaches and the level of success experienced with each. As shown in Table 3-14, 24 of the 35 public transit agencies that responded to this question (69%) indicated that they had included language in their service RFPs indicating that a stable, experienced vehicle operator workforce was expected. Three-quarters of those that used this procurement strategy indicated that it achieved some, moderate, or good success. Four of the 24 indicated good success (17%).

Eighteen public agencies out of 33 (55%) that responded to the second strategy indicated that they assigned points in the evaluation of proposals to whether the proposers would provide a stable, experienced vehicle operator workforce. This strategy was reported to have at least some success 78% of the time and good success 11% of the time.

Only two of the 35 respondents (6%) indicated that they had set a maximum goal in their RFPs for vehicle operator turnover. Little success with this option was reported by one of the agencies and only some success by the other.

Relatively few public entities (37%) indicated that they had included a "livable wage" or other minimum wage standard in their RFPs. Of the 13 who did this, 9 (69%) indicated at least some success, and 2 (15%) reported good success.

Twenty-one public agencies out of 35 that responded (60%) indicated that they included incentives and/or penalties in their contracts related to maintaining an adequate vehicle operator workforce or covering all runs assigned. This strategy was also reported to result in the greatest success, with 16 agencies (76%) saying it was at least somewhat successful and seven (33%) saying it had good success.

Eight public transit agencies indicated use of other strategies and provided descriptions of these other approaches. They had the following comments:

- "We are just awarding contracts so cannot determine the long term impact of changes in our process. Old contract had minimum wage standards, but that seemed to raise issues as two of the contract providers have union represented operators. We also removed penalties and incentives related to covering all runs, etc. as they cost more to administer than the incentive themselves and did not seem to make a difference in contractor behavior. We have established a new bid model with flexible start times where the start times can vary 1-2 hours per day. The operator will receive notification the day prior to service as to when they start the following day. We are sending more operators home before end of shift when enough late cancellations allow us to close routes early by moving rides."
- "East Bay Paratransit manager through a brokerage. Broker (Veolia) subcontracts with service providers. Veolia's contract with service providers includes liquidated damages for failing to cover runs. One service provider is a small in house unit of BART's bus partner in East Bay Paratransit—Alameda Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit). The paratransit unit is directed by Veolia and subject to same liquidated damages although there is no subcontract between Veolia and the paratransit unit."

- "Required at least status quo on wages and benefits required retention of existing qualified workforce."
- "There are penalties in place that cover completing the daily work schedule."
- "TARC pays contractor a retention bonus of $100/per employee every 3 months."
- "Here's the real issue here: the union contract that First Transit has with the Teamsters provides for shift and work bidding based on seniority (i.e., oldest operators pick first). As a result, ADA paratransit service generally is staffed with the least qualified employees. The other issue is a general lack of training and cross training for the dispatchers. Finally, these folks are simply not paid enough."
- "We have a union here. . . . that pretty much says it all."
- "80% or so aggregate turnover in SD is an unfortunate reality with coach or paratransit operators. Then one has to get creative so as to not have recruitment incentives directly and conversely impact retainment (e.g. free training leads to folks leaving for positions for even the same pay, for a different type operator job)."

Ten of the public transit agencies that indicated some, moderate, or good success with one or more of the strategies also provided more detailed information about these successes. They had the following comments:

- "Performance penalties and incentives seem to have some trickle down impact/incentive for the contractor to have staff tuned in on performance as important issue."
- "The contractor knows that we may 'audit' operator qualification and training files. We have and may ask to see documentation pertaining to background and driving record checks. The contractor knows we are watching. Still, his turnover is tremendous. It's very difficult to pay a decent wage and still make a profit in this business!"
- "As a rule, happy people make contented workers. A contented workforce makes good decisions and they are reliable. Requiring the contractor to provide a minimum or living wage helps to ensure a more contented workforce. Left to themselves, the contractor will try to keep wages as low as possible. This low rate will eventually cause personnel to leave. The turnover rate increases and valuable experience and skills are diluted or lost."
- "We use liquidated damages to discourage route turn back and operators being late for routes. There are other damages assessed for missed trips, late report submission, failure to notify etc."
- "Liquidated damages have made the service providers more inclined to cover runs with operators on overtime and be more creative about solving problems. However, during a severe operator shortage such as was experienced in all the Bay Area in FY 07, the LD's did not make a substantial improvement."
- "More than 50% of previous contractor employees stayed with new contractor."
- "Points are assigned via the evaluation process for a range of issues. Understanding and approach to the RFP, firm, staff experience and costs are evaluated and points are assessed accordingly. While we do not mandate specific wages, we do identify current wage scales. Liquidated damages and Incentives are designed to motivate contractors to perform within acceptable service standards."
- "Many contractors are still focused on submitting the 'lowest bid' and operator wages make up the majority of the overall cost (ASI specifies a price per gallon to be used for fuel). In the past we have encouraged that contractors set an operator wage above a minimum ($8.50) but in many cases the wages came in at the figure (but actually started much lower). We are exploring how to actually set the wage without becoming the implied employer of the operators."
- "Incentives and Liquidated Damages tied to performance work somewhat but overall I believe the contracted operators (not just the one here but ALL of them) would rather pay liquidated damages than do the training required to get a 5 star operation in place."
- "Assigned points in the evaluation process focused on the hiring of vehicle operator workforce of the previous service provider. Those operators from the previous service provider are expected to be stable and experienced. New operators hired beyond those operators are required to be trained to strict training criteria."
- "We make it clear we expect experienced, trained operators; by setting the bar high, we have a better chance of securing such workforce through contract."
- "We emphasized the importance of an experienced work force in the pre-bid meeting and in the RFP. We said operators need to be fairly compensated with competitive wages and benefits. We monitor the contractor to be sure they follow through. We encourage the contractor to have rewards and incentives for well-performing staff. We recognize good performance by individuals and reinforce good behavior to encourage more good behavior. For example, both District and contractor employees are eligible for the 'I Made a Difference' award. Although not in the RFP, bidders realized they had to comply w/union agreement to operate if they were awarded bid. The result was a relatively high operator wage for employees. All existing staff was retained."
- "The Contract language is thoroughly internalized by both MTS and the Contractor. With a contractor an agency

obviously has to incentivize/penalize to set some baseline expectation of service. Initially the language and/or the living wage had impacts. Having operated for 7 years now, the recruitment/retainment issue has assumed a life of its own in San Diego. Be it Paratransit, contracted fixed route, internal bus, Trolley or social service transportation, the number one shared 'solution' would be 'more operators.' True, San Diego cost of living measures simply have outpaced wages across the employment board. Currently, the contractor exceeds even high expectations for effort on the recruitment/retention 'effort' front if not on the measurable rate."

Five public transit agencies also indicated that they had written descriptions of their procurement strategies and that they could be contacted for more information. One agency sent actual RFP and contract language. More detailed information about the experiences of systems that indicated moderate or good success with innovative procurement strategies is presented in Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 4

Model of Factors That Affect Vehicle Operator Recruitment, Retention, and Performance

Information gathered from the literature search, focus groups, and national survey was used to develop a model to depict key factors in ADA paratransit vehicle operator recruitment, retention, and performance. This chapter describes the model and the factors that were identified. Several key interrelationships between the various factors in the model are also discussed. Finally, the underlying causal factors that affect operator recruitment and retention are also explored.

The "Performance Pyramid"

Figure 4-1 illustrates, at a very "macro" level, the key factors that impact vehicle operator performance. The factors form a "Performance Pyramid." At the base of the pyramid, there are three key ingredients for eventual high performance. These are recruiting "The Right" employees, providing these recruits and employees with effective training and appropriate tools, and providing the necessary support from other parts of the organization and a positive work environment that will enable vehicle operators to perform to the maximum of their abilities.

Job satisfaction and retention then form the middle of the pyramid. It is vital that quality vehicle operators are retained. The experience and skills gained by vehicle operators over time will have a direct impact on daily performance. Job satisfaction not only will be a major determinant in the decision to remain with the organization but will impact the attitude that vehicle operators bring to the job each day—a second key ingredient in performance. Each part of this "Performance Pyramid" is affected by numerous internal and external factors. These are explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Attracting and Selecting "The Right" Employees

Operating ADA paratransit service is much more than simply "driving." A high degree of direct assistance must often be provided to riders. The types of assistance provided depend on the particular disability or disabilities of each rider, and there are many different types of disabilities. ADA paratransit vehicle operators must bring to the job a high level of disability awareness, sensitivity, and passenger assistance and customer service skills.

Shared-ride paratransit service is also more complex than operating a fixed-route bus or taxi. Schedules can be demanding and must be understood and carried out correctly. Vehicle operators must also be familiar with all parts of the service area, rather than a set route, as pick-ups and drop-offs can happen throughout the area and in varying sequences.

It is therefore important to attract and recruit not just "drivers" but individuals who can become successful ADA complementary paratransit vehicle operators. Several internal and external factors must be considered in this process. These factors are illustrated in Figure 4-2 and explained in the following paragraphs.

Developing an Employee Profile and Pre-Qualifications

Most ADA paratransit service providers have a set of required pre-qualifications for vehicle operators. In many cases these are defined by contractual requirements or by law or insurance requirements. For insurance purposes or because of the type of vehicle used in the provision of service, vehicle operators may need to have a certain type of license and may need to be a minimum age or older. Since passenger safety and safe vehicle operation is of paramount importance, most systems and service providers require good driving records and criminal background checks. Federal and some state laws require that vehicle operators pass drug screening tests. To ensure that service is effectively provided, many systems and providers also require proficiency in English.

In addition to meeting the safety, legal, and contractual requirements, it is important to consider the inherent skills

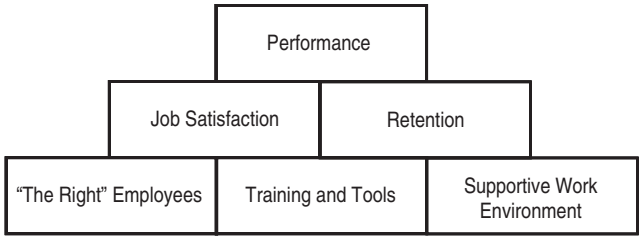


Figure 4-1. The "performance pyramid."

and qualities that recruits will bring to the job. Two of the more important skills and qualities are the following:

- A customer service attitude, and
- Spatial orientation and map reading skills.

Given the level of interaction between ADA paratransit vehicle operators and riders, it is vital that individuals recruited for these positions possess a customer service attitude or good "people skills." It is important to recruit beyond just individuals with experience driving buses, taxis, or other types of vehicles. The proper attitude must be given equal consideration. Some systems that offered input on this topic indicated that they find it more successful to "hire individuals with the right attitude and provide training as a vehicle operator" than to hire "an experienced vehicle operator and try to train them to have the right attitude." The ideal recruit will possess both types of qualities and skills.

The literature search found that focusing on hiring the "right person" was also successful and espoused in other industries. In the trucking industry, case studies indicated that some successful companies "hire persons with good attitudes and trained those individuals to drive" rather than focusing on hiring experienced operators from other companies.

Many systems and individuals also noted the importance of finding individuals who have good spatial orientation and who understand how to read maps. This skill is often taken for granted. The lack of map reading skills was cited as one of the main reasons that trainees fail in the training process, are terminated, or become frustrated with the job and leave.

Competitive Wages

To attract applicants who will eventually become successful, experienced, productive, and long-term vehicle operators, a competitive wage must be offered. While there are many things that prospective recruits consider when deciding to apply for and accepting a job as a vehicle operator, the wages offered where ranked by all who offered input as one of the most important. Without competitive wages, organizations are likely to attract a more transient workforce that is interested in any job, rather than more experienced and skilled individuals, or quality individuals with a good customer service attitude who are interested in being ADA paratransit vehicle operators. When the demands of the job become known, more transient applicants are then much more likely to not complete training or to leave as soon as a better paying job becomes available.

Low pay in current ADA paratransit operations was cited as a major factor in low training completion rates. Low pay was also cited by focus group participants and survey respondents as the main reason for high turnover.

In establishing a competitive rate, several external factors must be considered. The first is the overall job market. During times of lower unemployment, it may become necessary to offer higher wages or other benefits and incentives to attract quality candidates. Wages offered by other transportation companies in the area must also be considered. Once individuals are fully trained, they can easily move between service providers in the area. This is particularly true if they have Commercial Drivers Licenses or obtain them as part of their training.

The research also indicated that it is important to match the wage that is offered to the requirements of the job. It is important to not just provide a competitive "driver" wage but to offer

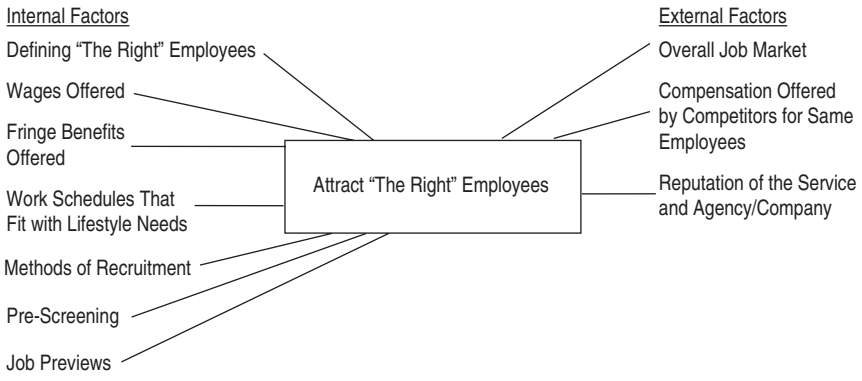


Figure 4-2. Factors that affect recruitment of "the right" individuals.

a wage that will attract individuals with the right attitude who can handle the rigors of shared-ride paratransit operations. Several vehicle operators and managers who participated in focus group discussions indicated that some people quit because they are able to find employment with equal pay but a lot less demanding.

Benefits

Another important part of the compensation equation are the fringe benefits provided. These must be appropriate given the labor market and able to compete with other similar employers. The benefits package must also consider the wages and income level of employees. The research indicated that while many service providers indicate that they offer health benefits, the employee contributions required often put these benefits beyond the reach of most vehicle operators. For example, the national survey found that in private contractor operated paratransit programs the average contribution required for an individual's health care coverage was 33%, and the average contribution for family health care coverage was 50%. In dollar terms, family coverage typically requires a contribution of $500 per month or more, and average starting wages in private contractor operations was only $10.47 per hour.

Not offering health care benefits, in particular, can limit the pool of potential applicants. Applicants with families and applicants without other ways to obtain health care coverage may place a premium on this particular benefit. Approximately 80% of the focus group operators from challenged (high turnover) systems commented that benefits for paratransit vehicle operators were inadequate. One operator related: "We need better benefits. Always changing insurance and giving us bad benefits." Another operator, citing inequities in benefits between fixed-route and paratransit operators stated: "The people who drive the big buses get more holidays than paratransit operators."

Work Shifts

The run structure and the work shifts created to cover runs can also have a significant impact on recruitment efforts. To provide capacity during both morning and afternoon peak time periods and to also minimize excess capacity during midday and evening hours, many systems have a number of split and part-time shifts. Some operators are asked to work several hours through the morning peak, take a 2–3 hour unpaid break during the middle of the day, and then work for several hours through the afternoon peak. This practice of split shifts is sometimes unpopular with vehicle operators and excessive use of split shifts could affect job satisfaction and retention. The national survey revealed that 42 (63%) of the 67 public and private contractors that responded to the question about what percentage of paratransit operators who were assigned to split shifts indicated that some full-time paratransit operators were assigned in this way. On average, 22% of full-time operators in these systems worked split shifts.

The survey also revealed that most ADA paratransit vehicle operators pick work shifts based on seniority. This is the case in 55 (81%) of the 68 systems that responded to the question about how work was assigned to vehicle operators. Thirteen systems (19%) assigned work to operators as needed. None of the systems indicated that operators are hired for specific work shifts. Full-time, straight shifts tend to be selected by senior employees which means that recruitment must often focus on filling the less desirable evening, weekend, part-time or split shifts. To provide new employees with enough hours to ensure a reasonable weekly income, part-time weekday shifts are often combined with weekend work. The resulting weekly work shifts offered to new recruits most often interfere with applicants' lifestyles or with family or other demands.

Creating work shifts that are more conducive to a reasonable lifestyle can help to improve recruitment efforts. This is also an important factor in retaining vehicle operators. While some productivity might be lost by not trimming runs and shifts to match service demand exactly, this loss of productivity might be offset by lower recruitment costs, lower training costs, and the improved efficiency through better retention.

Although not reported to be widely used in current paratransit operations, pay differentials may also be helpful in this area. If filling evening and weekend shifts as well as split-shifts proves to be difficult, a slightly higher wage might be offered for these less desirable assignments. The literature search indicated that pay differentials are successfully used in the trucking industry. The survey of current ADA paratransit operations, however, found that only a few paratransit providers utilize pay differentials.

Recruitment Efforts

Innovative recruitment efforts can also be used to attract "the right" employees. Signing bonuses and referral bonuses are offered by many systems and service providers. Typically, these bonuses range from $200 to $500. To help with retention, some systems offer to pay part of the bonus at the time the new recruit is employed and then to pay the remainder of the bonus after the new employee completes a certain period of employment (e.g., 90 days). Research completed for *TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium* (*27*) found employee referral programs to be a best practice of using internal recruitment resources within the transit industry. The study report included five examples of how transit agencies design and implement referral programs. While the amount of referral payments differed from agency to agency, the concepts of how to make the program meaningful were the same. For

instance, in each case the programs were designed in multi-phased bonus formats with the referring employee receiving two or more payments at designated periods of employment of the new hire.

Current employees are often overlooked in their natural role as informal recruiting resources. Focus group participants (vehicle operators) spoke about how they are asked on a number of occasions about the nature of their jobs and how they provide information about their work and on how to apply for the position. The person who enjoys the job of paratransit vehicle operator and is good at it can be a spontaneous cost-effective goodwill ambassador for the employer.

Several focus group participants indicated that they learned of their current jobs by word-of-mouth. They also indicated that while on-the-road they are often stopped by strangers who inquire about possible employment opportunities. This word-of-mouth recruitment appears to be a significant part of finding new vehicle operators in current ADA paratransit services, and where this is the case, referral bonuses can be particularly effective. Word-of-mouth recruitment is also likely to work more effectively when the current workforce is content. Dissatisfied vehicle operators may not be encouraging to individuals who ask about the job.

Some systems also report that they have had success recruiting individuals who are retired and seeking a supplemental income. This is a particularly effective strategy in communities with significant retirement populations as well as in communities with retired military personnel. It has also been reported by several providers that older, retired employees tend to be reliable and more customer service oriented. They also may not have a problem working part-time shifts and fewer hours per week. Sometimes, fringe benefits are not as critical if they have benefits from their prior jobs.

On the other hand, older workers may be more sensitive to shifts that do not match their lifestyles. While older employees may not mind part-time shifts (e.g., 4–5 hours per day), they may not want to work evening or weekend shifts. If paratransit systems can be more effective in recruiting older workers, they may find it more beneficial to create part-time work for these operators rather than to rely too heavily on split shifts.

More targeted focus on recruiting older workers is also important since the workforce is aging. As noted previously, the number of older workers in the workforce is expected to increase by 56% by 2012. Several reports identified in the literature search stressed that organizations will need to attract older workers in the future to remain competitive. Job fairs targeted to older job seekers were reported in the national survey to be one successful way to recruit older workers.

Some paratransit providers also reported success targeting and recruiting health care and social service employees from home health care and other industries. These employees may be more likely to bring a customer service attitude and skills in working with persons with disabilities.

Pre-Screening and Job Previews

The literature and focus group discussions noted the need for effective pre-screening and realistic job previews. It is important to identify individuals who meet all qualifications and are likely to succeed in the job. Effective pre-screening can also prevent high training drop-out rates and preserve training resources. Providing applicants with a realistic description of the job can also help individuals decide if the job is right for them.

Agency/Company Image

Individuals in the community are more likely to seek employment with an organization if the word-of-mouth is that the organization is a good employer. Similarly, if the local paratransit service has a positive reputation, individuals interested in the job for social or "people" reasons are more likely to apply.

Second only to a paycheck, participants in the focus groups that were conducted indicated that they were drawn to the job (or continued in the job) because they liked working with people and felt that they were performing an important service. It is possible that building a good local service reputation would help draw more people to want to be part of the program.

Conversely, if the company or service has a negative reputation, it may be harder to attract individuals interested in doing community work. Higher pay or other compensation may be necessary to offset this negative perception in order to obtain high-quality recruits.

One approach that may assist with recruitment is to highlight vehicle operators in local community news stories. This may also help with retention. A number of systems and providers indicated that one of the main reasons for high drop-out rates in training is that recruits do not have a good sense of the job that they are applying for. Once they learn all of the requirements of the job, they decide it is not for them or decide that they can get less demanding employment for the same or comparable pay. Community news stories may help provide the public and potential recruits with a better idea of the requirements of the job of vehicle operator.

Providing Effective Training and Tools

In addition to finding "The Right" employee, it is important that employees are properly trained, receive the necessary tools, and receive appropriate support from others in the organization. The overall work environment is also an impor-

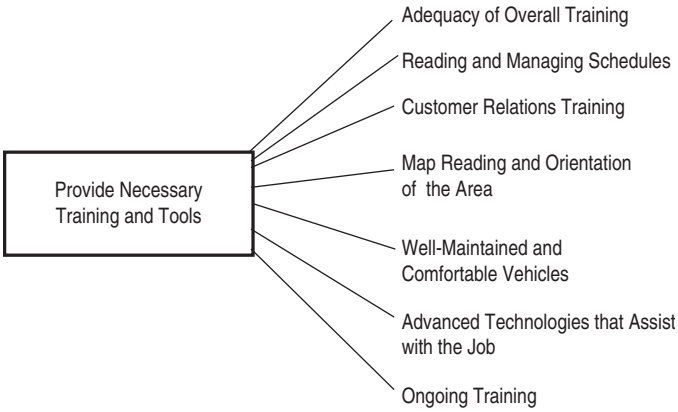


Figure 4-3. Key factors in training and on-the-job tools.

tant factor. Figure 4-3 shows some of the key considerations in training and the tools that can help with recruitment and retention.

Training

Effective initial training is obviously important for preparing new vehicle operators for the job. Being adequately prepared to perform the job can reduce frustration, increase job satisfaction, improve retention, and improve performance.

The national survey of paratransit providers found that, on average, about 127 hours of training is typically provided. This includes about 59 hours of classroom instruction and 68 hours of on-the-road training. Longer training (up to eight weeks) is provided by public entities that have combined fixed-route and paratransit workforces and that train new vehicle operators in both modes. Classroom training typically covers the service policies and procedures, the company policies and procedures, ADA requirements, orientation to vehicles and equipment, passenger assistance techniques, disability awareness, customer service training, defensive driving, map reading, drug and alcohol program training, sexual harassment training, orientation to schedules and paperwork, and other topics. In some systems, short versions of first-aid and CPR are provided.

The first part of the on-the-road portion of the training typically has the new operator ride along with an experienced operator/trainer. In the latter part of the on-the-road training, the new operator performs the service and is observed by an experienced operator/trainer.

Best practice is to test for proficiency as each portion of the training is completed. This involves written tests for the classroom training and observations and grading of performance for the passenger assistance and vehicle and equipment orientation segments, as well as a final grading of performance at the end of the on-the-road segment. Best practice also includes individuals with disabilities in the disability awareness, ADA requirements, and passenger assistance portions of the training.

As noted in the "Developing an Employee Profile and Pre-Qualifications" section, the research to date indicates that improved skills in map reading and schedule reading are needed. Typically, in the classroom portions of most training programs, only about 4 hours are allocated to map reading and about 2 hours to schedule reading. Many of the operators who participated in the focus groups indicated that additional training time was needed in these areas.

In terms of schedule reading and management, there reportedly is a need for new vehicle operators to have a better understanding of all of the "times" involved in ADA paratransit and included on the manifests. For example, if a manifest shows the scheduled pick-up time, rather than the ETA, new vehicle operators need to know that there is an on-time window associated with that scheduled time and they have 20 or 30 minutes leeway in performing that trip. A common complaint of vehicle operators, repeated in the focus groups, is that the schedule has them "in two places at the same time." This is likely due to the fact that the scheduled time is shown and the scheduler expects one pick-up to be performed early in the 20–30 minute on-time window and the second to be performed later in the window. If the ETA is shown, operators need to know that the scheduler is expecting them to perform trips as close as possible to this time to make the schedule work (but that there still may be some leeway even with ETAs). Better training in understanding how to read and use the time allowances in the schedule can improve job satisfaction and performance.

Another common issue cited by systems and operators is the lack of full understanding of the features of advanced technologies. For example, the main screen on mobile computer systems (MDCs) may show only basic trip information. Special pick-up instructions are often contained on secondary screens. Vehicle operators need to be trained to know how to access these secondary screens, and an emphasis needs to be placed on making sure that all trip information is checked before a pick-up is made. Not understanding how to access full information can result in no-shows and missed trips, operator frustration, and decreased performance. In general, if advanced technologies are employed, training to proficiency in the operation of these systems is needed.

An innovative practice that was identified in the research was to start the training program by having applicants spend a day on the road with an experienced operator; this reportedly gave operators a much better sense of the actual job. Applicants have an opportunity at the end of this first day to decide if they want to pursue the job. It was reported that giving applicants this early exposure reduced drop-out rates

later in the training process. It would also make the classroom training more pertinent and "real."

Finally, ongoing training can impact job satisfaction, retention, and performance. If new operators are having difficulty with certain aspects of the job, additional instruction should be provided. New operators should also be made to feel that it is okay to alert supervisors and managers to parts of the job about which they feel they need additional instruction.

Tools

In addition to effective and thorough training, job satisfaction, retention, and performance are impacted by providing vehicle operators with the tools they need to do the job to the best of their ability. These tools include well-designed and properly maintained equipment, accessibility equipment that is functional and easy to use, and communications equipment that is reliable and effective. Vehicle operators "live with" the equipment provided every day. Their comfort as well as productivity is affected directly by the adequacy of these tools.

Clean, well maintained vehicles also impact the image that is projected of the service and the agency/company. This image reflects on the vehicle operators and can impact job satisfaction. As noted in the "Agency/Company Image" section, it can also impact public perception of the service and company and can affect recruitment.

A possible best practice is to involve vehicle operators in the design, testing, and selection of vehicles and equipment. While maintenance personnel are often involved in equipment design and selection, fewer systems get feedback from vehicle operators.

Advanced technologies can also assist vehicle operators and improve performance. A number of respondents to the survey noted that they have installed GPS navigation systems on vehicles and have found that it helps new operators in particular. Even with better training and more time spent on map reading and learning the area, it is difficult for new operators to have a good working knowledge of the entire service area (particularly in very large systems). Technology that can assist with finding specific addresses can relieve much of the stress placed on new operators and can even assist experienced operators in finding infrequent or uncommon addresses.

MDCs can make the communications between vehicle operators and dispatchers more efficient and can reduce wait times for dispatch assistance. MDCs can also minimize the manual writing that is associated with paper manifest or with add-ons to the schedule. As noted above, though, if advanced technologies are employed, these systems need to function properly and vehicle operators need to be trained to use them. It has been reported that poorly performing equipment or a lack of understanding of these advance technologies can have negative impacts on vehicle operator performance and job satisfaction.

Providing Support and a Positive Work Environment

The provision of efficient and quality ADA paratransit service requires a team effort. To perform to their maximum ability, vehicle operators need good support from other parts of the organization, including scheduling and dispatch. Recognizing when operators perform well and offering support during difficult operating times is vital. A good overall work environment and a process that ensures that vehicle operators are "heard" is also important for job satisfaction, retention, and performance. Figure 4-4 illustrates key factors that impact the work environment.

Workable Schedules

One of the more surprising findings of the early research is the role that scheduling plays in job satisfaction and retention of vehicle operators. Along with pay and work shifts, the workability of run schedules was a major issue with operators who participated in focus groups. Supervisors participating in focus groups cited scheduling as the most frequent source of frustration for paratransit operators with seven of the nine supervisors making statements in this regard.

During focus groups, a number of vehicle operators reported that poorly designed schedules and tight scheduling can be a major source of frustration. A female operator commented that late night flex shifts are "discouraging and kind of frightening since the system operates until midnight." They cited circuitous scheduling and scheduling that "didn't make sense." There were also complaints about schedules with too many trips to be performed on-time. Add-ons to the schedule during the day of service were also raised as an issue: "Schedule you a day off and then draft you to work on your off day."

Vehicle operators noted that poorly designed schedules can make them feel that they are constantly failing at their jobs. In addition, it leads to conflicts with riders who may be picked-up late, may ride an excessively long time on an overly circuitous route, or who may get to appointments late.

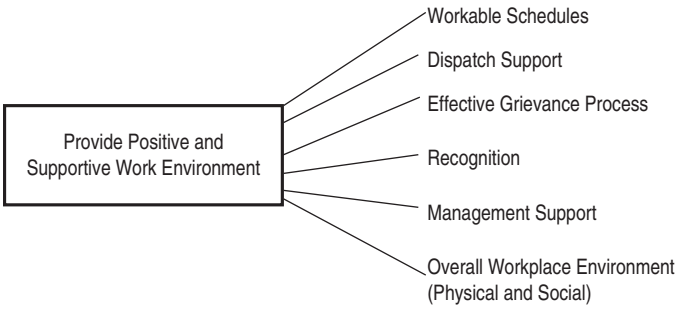


Figure 4-4. Key factors in providing supportive and positive work environment.

A best practice that was identified in the early research was scaling back on schedules for newer operators. A number of systems reported that they identify the runs that will be performed by new operators and reduce the number of trips on those runs. This is done by either reducing the estimated travel speeds on those runs (thereby allowing more time between pick-ups and drop-offs), or by simply limiting the total number of trips per hour. Systems typically reported reducing travel speeds to 80% of the speeds of other, fully utilized runs.

The research also noted that more experienced vehicle operators, who have seniority and first choice in the selection of shifts, often will choose runs with set subscription riders. These runs are more stable from day to day and once learned are easier to perform than runs that involve a lot of many-to-many trips. As a result, newer operators may end up with more of the difficult run assignments which when combined with less knowledge of the area and less experience with map reading, can impact performance and job satisfaction.

Dispatch Support

The level of support received from radio dispatchers was also a key factor noted by vehicle operators who participated in the focus groups. The importance of the relationship between vehicle operators and dispatchers is also well documented in the literature. A lack of support by dispatchers or outright conflict between vehicle operators and dispatchers can have a major impact on job satisfaction and performance. Several operators indicated that they recognize that the job of dispatchers is very difficult but cited a lack of teamwork to address difficult situations.

The provision of shared-ride ADA paratransit service is a difficult job even under the best of circumstances. With traffic, weather, missed customer connections, issues with riders, and other factors, it can be difficult to manage and perform a schedule. In many areas, the situation is also exacerbated by the fact that resources are stretched to the limits. As a result, scheduling is often tight. Service may sometimes run late and riders may often be upset with the service they are provided. In these situations, the daily provision of service can be even more difficult.

Vehicle operators who provided input at the focus group meetings seemed to understand the pressures on the system and the pressures that dispatchers were under. There was a sense that they were willing to "share the load" and work with dispatchers to make the best of the situation they were in. They did not, however, appreciate it when dispatchers seemed to take out their frustrations and difficulties on them or did not seem to do their part in trying to address these issues as a team. Some of the feelings expressed included:

- "You don't get help from them. They don't know the city themselves. It is frustrating when you can't do what you could because of poor planning."
- "Dispatchers are disrespectful and rude."
- "Dispatchers sometimes don't sympathize with what the operators are dealing with."

Managers who participated in the focus groups concurred with operators that disrespectful dispatchers negatively impact operator job satisfaction.

Transit systems and service providers need to select dispatchers who can not only manage runs but can effectively manage the workforce they are assigned to oversee. Training dispatchers on how to manage the workforce in a positive way during times of stress can be very helpful. Selecting dispatchers who can work effectively with operators in a positive way is also important.

Management Support

Beyond the radio dispatchers, vehicle operators need the support of others in the organization, particularly their direct supervisors and the system managers. These other staff can have a major impact on the degree to which the organization operates effectively and as a team. Supervisors and managers need to understand the conditions under which vehicle operators and other staff are operating and need to be supportive when appropriate.

A lack of management support, or even worse—poor management or dispatch—can undermine other efforts to improve retention. Modest increases in wages, improvements in benefits, and improved training are not likely to be enough to keep good employees if they feel that they are "on their own" when there are difficult paratransit operating issues or if they are made to feel that service problems are "their fault."

During focus groups, managers expressed their desire to make employees feel they are appreciated and listened to and said they provide opportunities that encourage operators to communicate their concerns. They spoke about regularly scheduled open forums in which operators get to talk about anything they want to discuss. Some organizations have employee committees set up that employees can access if they need to air any concerns.

TCRP Synthesis 71: Paratransit Manager's Skills, Qualifications, and Needs profiled four paratransit managers. One manager stated that "good managers must be able to motivate the drivers in a manner that allows the driver to feel 'ownership' in the operation. . . . A good paratransit manager must also ensure that the dispatchers, reservationists, schedulers, and vehicle operators communicate effectively with each other on an ongoing and consistent basis." In regard to employee involvement, comfortable settings, consistent

management interaction, or supportive supervisory practices, "respondents noted that a strong support team of drivers and dispatchers is essential and is the backbone of paratransit operations. . . . Know your people and they need to know you." Other comments focused on employee development, skills training, and maintaining a positive and supportive culture for employees.

A best practice identified in *Synthesis 71* is for supervisors and managers to spend time each week or month riding vehicles and directly observing the operation. This time on-board can provide important insights into operating issues and can demonstrate real involvement and concern about the issues faced by vehicle operators.

An Effective Grievance Process

As disputes and issues arise, it is also important to have an effective process for receiving and handling grievances. Many of the managers and supervisors that participated in focus groups or who responded to the survey indicated that it was important to maintain an "open door" policy and invite any employees to bring issues directly to them. As issues are identified, it is then important that they are not just heard but are acted on. Actions taken then need to be communicated back to employees so that they know that something has been done. Even if larger factors prevent an ideal solution, communicating these factors to employees will reduce frustrations and avoid the impression that no efforts were made or that "nothing ever gets addressed."

Recognition

All employees value and appreciate recognition and positive reinforcement. This is particularly important for ADA paratransit vehicle operators who often operate under difficult circumstances. Being on the road can make operators feel somewhat separate from the other parts of the operation, and recognition and positive reinforcement can help make operators feel more a part of the team.

A number of systems and service providers have employee of the month and employee of the year programs or have other ways of publicly recognizing good performance. Many systems also report that they provide awards and bonuses for good performance. Commonly reported programs recognize and reward safe operation, reliability and attendance, on-time performance, low complaint rates, or a combination of these performance items.

In some systems, concern was expressed about the way that bonuses were distributed or how the goals were set. Input from managers and vehicle operators indicated that bonus programs need to be fair and meaningful. At the same time, they need to be achievable.

Work Environment

A common theme in systems that were identified to have stable workforces was that there was a good overall work environment. Vehicle operators from these systems reported that the organization was like a "family" and that they enjoyed the people they worked with. They indicated that the organization had a real interest in its employees and looked out for their interest.

Small efforts, such as recognizing birthdays and periodically hosting breakfasts or company gatherings, were cited as things that helped improve the camaraderie and the overall work environment. Each of the other factors noted—support, recognition, and hearing and acting on concerns—also plays a part in the cultivation of a positive work environment. Some efforts can have an immediate impact, but more often, changing the work environment is something that requires time and requires ongoing effort to maintain.

Managers should also not underestimate the importance of a comfortable and inviting physical work environment. Vehicle operators appreciate a comfortable area to spend time on breaks or between shifts and an area where they can review and plan out schedules before going out on runs. Some systems also provide exercise equipment and facilities. A comfortable and well-appointed facility lets operators know that they are important to the company and are appreciated.

Underlying Causal Factors That Impact Vehicle Operator Recruitment and Retention

The previous sections detail the factors that directly impact vehicle operator recruitment, retention and performance. There are also significant underlying causal factors that often have an impact. This section details one such factor that was raised by systems and providers. This situation is illustrated in Figure 4-5.

ADA paratransit ridership has grown steadily since the passage of the ADA in 1990, with increases of 5% to 10% per year not uncommon at many systems. At the same time, many agency budgets have not grown at a similar rate. As a result, transit agencies and ADA paratransit managers are under pressure to deliver services as efficiently as possible and with as few resources as possible. Where services are contracted out, cost is a major factor in the selection of providers. In turn, prospective service providers understand that keeping the bid process as low as possible can be a determining factor in whether or not they are selected as a contractor.

This pressure on resources and costs appears to have an impact on vehicle operator recruitment and retention. Wages for paratransit service are sometimes very low and fringe benefits are often limited. The national survey found that start-

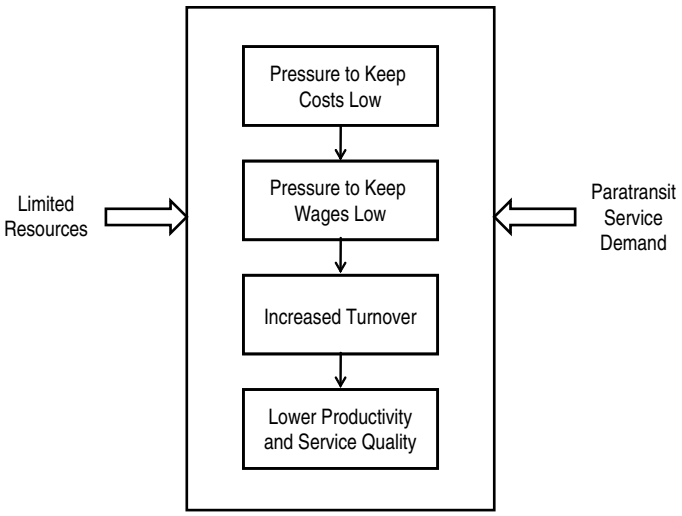


Figure 4-5. Underlying pressures that impact paratransit costs and performance.

ing wages for paratransit operators range from $7.00 per hour to $15.77 per hour. The average wage varies depending on the type of operation, with operators employed by public agencies receiving an average of $12.06 per hour but operators of private contractors receiving only $10.47 on average. Wages also vary depending on union representation, with non-union operators at public agencies receiving an average wage of $11.30 per hour and non-union operators at private contractors receiving an average wage of only $9.03 per hour. As a result, contracted service providers report that it is difficult to attract and keep vehicle operators. Annual post-training turnover rates for private paratransit contractors average 30% per year and range as high as 80% per year. This, in turn, is reported to impact vehicle operator performance and overall system performance and cost.

In some ways, though, pressures to minimize costs can have the *opposite* impact. Lower cost proposals, which are lower mainly because of lower wages and benefits, may be accepted. The lower wages and benefits may then result in higher vehicle operator turnover, which in turn can result in a less productive service. If productivity is lower than planned, this means that more vehicle-hours must be operated to meet the same level of demand. Since many public transit agencies pay contractors on a per vehicle-hour of service basis, more vehicle-hours of service raises the total cost. The extra cost of added vehicle-hours could be more than the cost of paying for a provider with slightly higher bid costs but with a more productive workforce.

For example, in a system where the demand is for 100,000 trips a year, operating at a productivity of 1.3 trips per vehicle hour rather than 1.5 trips per vehicle-hour would require 76,923 hours of service rather than 66,667 hours of service (a 15% increase in the hours needed). A contractor with a $45 per hour rate operating at 1.3 trips per hour would actually cost more, in the long run, than a contractor charging $51 per hour but providing a workforce that could operate at 1.5 trips per hour.

Important Inter-Relationships

Figure 4-5 illustrates how certain factors impact vehicle operator recruitment, retention, and performance. There are also a number of important inter-relationships between factors. The literature, focus groups, and surveys suggest certain relationships, but there is little hard research data that details these key inter-relationships. Key relationships between factors that may be useful to research are described in more detail in the following sections.

Compensation, Turnover, Productivity, and Total Cost

Information from the national survey indicates that there is a strong relationship between compensation paid to vehicle operators and the annual turnover of the operator workforce. It is also believed that lower turnover can improve productivity. A more experienced workforce is more familiar with the service area, riders, and pick-up locations. This should translate into an ability to run schedules more efficiently. Increased productivity reduces the total number of service hours that must be operated to meet a given demand, which in turn lowers the total cost of service.

At the same time, since wages and fringe benefits account for 60–70% of total service cost, an increase in compensation has a direct impact on the unit cost of service (cost per vehicle-hour). An increase in the unit cost of service in turn has a direct impact on total service costs. These impacts of compensation levels are illustrated in Figure 4-6.

As shown in Figure 4-6, there is a direct relationship between wages and benefits paid and unit cost of service (increased wages and benefits result in increased unit costs). There is an inverse relationship between wages and compensation paid and turnover (increased wages and benefits lower turnover). Case studies presented in Chapter 6 also suggest an inverse relationship between turnover and productivity (all else being equal, lower turnover and a more experienced workforce result in higher productivity). Productivity has an inverse relationship to the number of hours of service that must be operated (the higher the productivity, the fewer the number of vehicle-hours needed for a given level of demand). All of these inter-relationships suggest that while an increase in compensation will raise the unit cost per hour of service, it also should increase productivity and decrease the number of vehicle-hours of service needed, which will tend to lower the total cost.

A better understanding of the magnitude of these direct and inverse inter-relationships could be very helpful to paratransit managers and public transit agencies. Knowing the

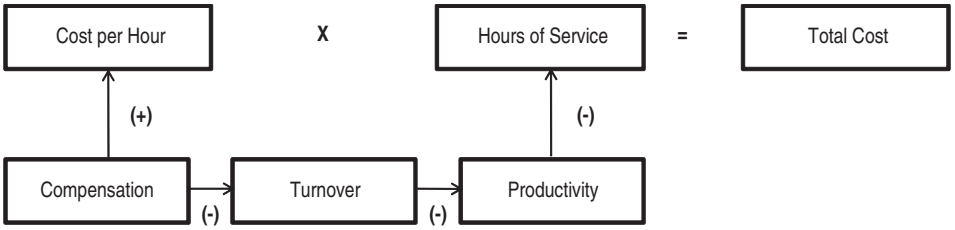


Figure 4-6. Inter-relationships between compensation, turnover, productivity, and total cost.

degree to which increased wages impact turnover and the impact of years of experience on productivity would allow systems to set wages and compensation to minimize total cost. This issue is explored more fully in Chapter 6.

Compensation and Recruitment and Training Costs

A second important set of inter-relationships exist between compensation—the wages and fringe benefits provided—and recruitment and training costs. These inter-relationships are illustrated in Figure 4-7. As shown in Figure 4-7, recruitment cost is determined by multiplying the number of new hires needed per year by the per hire recruitment cost, where the number of new hires needed per year is determined by the total workforce requirement, training completion rates, and post-training turnover. Training costs are determined by the number of new recruits multiplied by the per trainee cost.

Compensation has several impacts on the factors in this equation. Higher compensation can lower post-training turnover [illustrated by the negative (–) relationship between "Compensation" and "Post-Training Turnover" in Figure 4-7]. Because post-training turnover has a direct relationship to the number of new hires needed [illustrated by the plus (+) sign in Figure 4-7], lower post-training can lower the number of new hires needed. Higher compensation can also lower per hire recruitment costs by creating a larger pool of more qualified potential new hires. Increased compensation can decrease the drop-out rate in training by both attracting more qualified new hires and by decreasing the number of trainees who feel that the compensation does not match the demands of the job. Finally, more competitive compensation can lower retraining costs by developing a better workforce that requires less frequent retraining.

A key for paratransit managers and transit systems is balancing the increased compensation costs against the savings in total recruitment and training costs. A better understanding of the magnitude of the relationships and impacts illustrated in Figure 4-7 would help managers set the level of compensation to minimize overall costs.

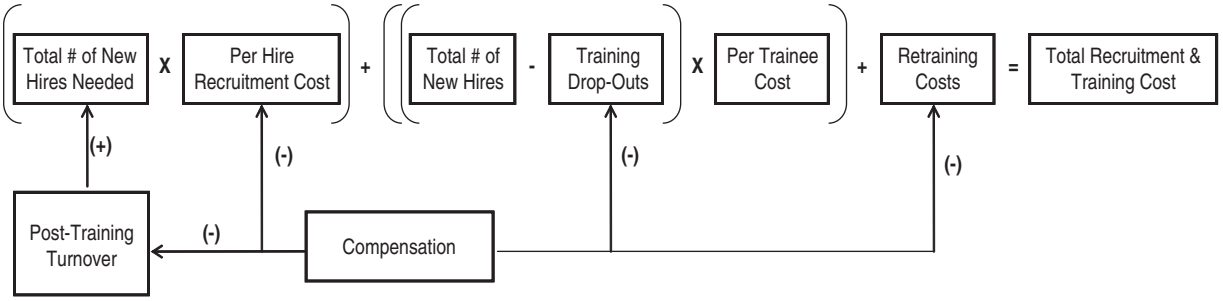


Figure 4-7. Inter-relationships between compensation and recruitment and training costs.

CHAPTER 5

The Relationship Between Compensation and Turnover

Purpose of the Analysis and Data Sources

Relatively low levels of compensation are often cited as issues in ADA paratransit vehicle operator recruitment and retention. This was noted in several reports and articles identified in the literature search. It was also one of the key findings of the focus group discussions summarized in Chapter 3. The national survey results summarized in Chapter 4 also provided information that suggested that vehicle operator compensation was an issue. Wages for ADA paratransit vehicle operators were found to be lower than for fixed-route operators. Fringe benefits for ADA paratransit operators were also found to be minimal, especially for services operated by private contractors. An initial tabulation and graphing of starting wage rates versus turnover rates, based on the survey responses, also indicated a possible relationship (see Figure 3-8).

It would be expected that higher rates of compensation would enable providers to attract more qualified applicants and to be more selective in hiring qualified operators who are likely to stay on the job. High rates of compensation would also be expected to reduce incentives for operators to seek other work. To test this hypothesis, a regression analysis was conducted using data obtained from the national survey. Components of compensation that were requested from respondents in the national survey included the following:

- Training wage,
- Starting wage,
- Maximum wage,
- Days of vacation in the first year of employment,
- Maximum vacation days per year that can be earned,
- Paid holidays per year,
- Percent employee contribution required for individual health care coverage, and
- Percent employee contribution required for family health care coverage.

All of these items were tested for their influence on retention, which was measured using the annual post-training turnover rate (defined as the number of operators terminated after completion of training in the preceding 12 months, either voluntarily or not, divided by the current number of operators). The following three additional variables that could influence retention were also tested:

- Whether the provider is a public transit system or a private company under contract to a public transit system;
- Completion rate (the percentage of trainees who completed training in the past 12 months); and
- Part-time operators as a percentage of all paratransit operators.

Labor rates in each service area were used to adjust wages to account for the fact that operators in different parts of the country face very different circumstances in deciding whether to stay with a job driving a paratransit vehicle. For this purpose, median hourly wages for Transportation and Material Moving Occupations from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' May 2008 Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates were used.

Some preliminary tabulations of these variables were prepared for the Interim Report. Since then, the data have been subjected to rigorous examinations to detect possible misunderstandings in the responses or data entry errors as the respondents typed their answers into the survey website. As needed, respondents were contacted by email to resolve uncertainties. Some points of confusion that were found included the following:

- Counting taxi drivers as employees;
- Responding with full-time equivalents instead of numbers of employees;
- Including operators who drive both paratransit and fixed route;

- Duplicate responses (for example, responses from two people at the same agency); and
- Providing the employer contribution to health care instead of the employee contribution.

Operators who drive both paratransit and fixed-route service could have much lower turnover than operators who drive only paratransit. Unfortunately, too few systems use this mode of operations to test this hypothesis, but these responses were included for analysis of other variables.

After elimination of systems that provided unusable data, 57 systems remained that were usable for regression analysis. Of these some did not provide answers to all the questions, so the number of cases varies somewhat, depending on the combination of variables tested.

Exploratory Analysis

As a preliminary exploration, correlations between turnover and candidate variables were calculated. Only four variables have statistically significant correlations with turnover, as shown in Table 5-1.

The negative values mean that increasing values of these variables correspond to lower rates of turnover. All of these correlations are significantly different from zero with at least 95% confidence. The absence of a number of variables is somewhat surprising. Notably, adjusted labor rates turn out to be weakly correlated with turnover. The maximum wage level and the percentage of health coverage cost paid by the employee are somewhat more strongly correlated with turnover but not at a statistically significant level.

Table 5-1. Correlations with turnover rate.

• Variable	Correlation*
• Percent part-time	-0.25
• Public or contract provider	-0.37
• Starting wage (unadjusted)	-0.28
• Training completion rate	-0.35

*A correlation of -1.0 would mean a perfect correlation between the variable shown and the turnover rate, while a correlation of 0.0 would mean no correlation at all.

Public providers have significantly lower turnover rates than contract providers. As shown in Table 5-2, contract providers averaged a 32% turnover, compared to 16% at public providers. This suggests an exploration of whether the difference is due to better wages and benefits at public providers or to some aspect of public agency operation other than compensation. Table 5-2 shows how the various measures of compensation compare between contract and public providers. In general, public operators provide better compensation on average, especially as regards wages and health care coverage. The percentage of part-time operators is somewhat lower at contract operators, but not by a statistically significant amount. There is also very little difference in the total amount of paid time off that employees can receive at contract and public providers.

Regression Analysis

Variables can often interact in surprising ways. For this reason, even variables that did not directly have significant

Table 5-2. Differences between contract and public providers.*

Variable	Contract Providers	Public Providers	Difference (Public – Contract)	Statistical Significance
Turnover	32%	16%	-16%	99%
Percent Part-time	14%	18%	4%	Not significant
Training Wage	$8.55	$9.62	$1.07	90%
Completion Rate	63%	80%	17%	95%
Starting Wage	$10.46	$12.05	$1.59	99%
Maximum Wage	$14.18	$16.61	$2.42	99%
Starting Wage - Adjusted	$10.30	$12.41	$2.11	99%
Maximum Wage - Adjusted	$13.85	$17.10	$3.25	99%
Starting PTO for full-time operators**	11.2	14.4	3.2	96%
Maximum PTO for full-time operators*	21.9	22.8	0.9	Not significant
Employer contribution to health coverage (full-time operators)***	60%	81%	21%	99%

* Numbers and percentages may vary slightly from national survey results presented in Chapter 3 since the regression analysis was based on a subset of systems with complete survey data and on revised data obtained during follow-up contacts.

** Paid Time Off (PTO) is calculated as paid vacation plus paid holidays.

*** Typically, employers pay a lower share for family coverage than individual coverage. For simplicity, the average of the two is used in this analysis. If a provider reported not offering individual or family health coverage, the employer contribution was set at 0%.

correlations with turnover could have an influence after controlling for some other variable. Therefore, most of the variables in Table 5-2 are included in the regression analysis.

One variable that was excluded was the training completion rate. Although completion rate is correlated with turnover, examination of the data suggests that a high completion rate may be as much a result of low turnover as a cause. Many of the systems with high completion rates had very small numbers of trainees, which would be expected with low rates of turnover. As a hypothesis, a low turnover rate results in the provider needing to recruit only a few new operators, which means that the provider can be very selective, which would tend to produce a high training completion rate.

The regression analysis found that only the same three variables in Table 5-1 (excluding completion rate) contributed significantly to any model of turnover rate. Two models of interest are the following:

Model 1

Turnover = 0.685 − (0.035 × Starting Wage)
− (0.101 × Public)

(t statistic)	(−2.11)	(−1.77)
(significance)	(0.040)	(0.083)

R Squared = 0.21

Model 2

Turnover = 0.864 − (0.051 × Starting Wage)
− (0.244 × Percent Part-Time)

(t statistic)	(−3.44)	(−1.71)
(significance)	(0.001)	(0.092)

R Squared = 0.20

The variable "Public" takes the value 1 for public providers and 0 for contract providers. In both models, the variables other than starting wage are significant with less than 95% confidence but are nearly significant and can be included on the basis of strong theoretical justification and the small sample size. No other combination of these three variables results in a model with significant or even nearly significant coefficients. Both models use 57 valid cases.

The two models demonstrate that there is a strong connection between wages and turnover, with higher wages connecting with lower turnover. The equations imply that an increase of $1.00 in wages corresponds, on average, to a drop of 3.5% (Model 1) to 5.1% (Model 2) in turnover rate. Although, the R Squared values show that, even in combination with other variables, wages only account for 20% to 21% of the variation in turnover rates. In addition, the models show that (1) by controlling wages, public providers have turnover rates that are 10% lower than private providers on average and (2) lower percentages of part-time operators are connected with lower turnover rates. A difference of 10% in the percentage of part-time operators corresponds, on average, with a difference of 2.4% in turnover rate.

Graphical Analysis and Discussion

Starting Wage, Provider Type, and Turnover

Figure 5-1 shows in graphical form the relationship represented by regression Model 1. The public providers (black squares) have a lower turnover than the contract providers (hollow diamonds), though there is considerable overlap

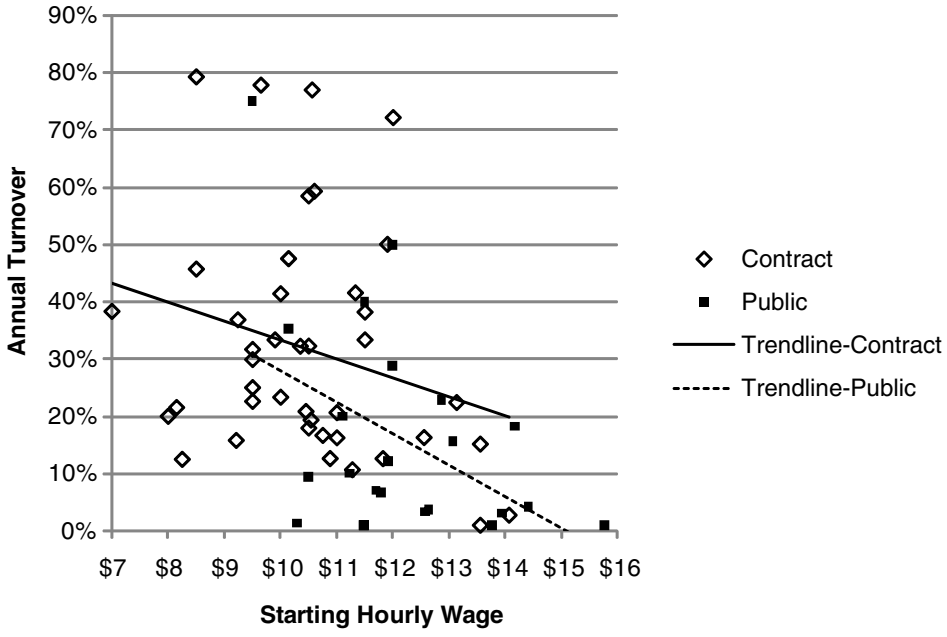


Figure 5-1. Starting wage, public/private contract providers, and turnover.

between the two groups. Within each group there is a loose association between wages and turnover. Most of the higher wage providers have a very low turnover, but there are many lower wage systems with moderate rates of turnover. In the case of the public providers, the trend is dominated by a few providers that have zero or near-zero turnover and high wages.

The results suggest that there is some aspect of public service provision that produces lower turnover other than simply higher wage rates. For example, operators working for public providers have more job security because they do not face the uncertainty connected with changes in contract providers and also because public providers may have more procedures in place that require a clear cause of termination and attempts to remedy the poor performance before an operator can be terminated. Operators working for public providers probably have better pension benefits which would provide an incentive for an operator to stay with the job. Since public operators have access to capital funds to build facilities and are less driven to maximize profit or cut costs, working conditions for vehicle operators at public providers are probably better in most cases than at private contractors.

Figure 5-2 shows the relationship represented by regression Model 2. The highest wage group (asterisks) has the lowest turnover, the lowest wage group (hollow diamonds) has the highest turnover, and the medium-wage group (black squares) is in the middle. As with the public/private distinction, there is a great deal of overlap in turnover rates among the wage categories. Within the middle- and low-wage groups, the association between the percentage of part-time operators and turnover found by the regression model is apparent though loose. In the case of the high-wage group, there is no clear association between turnover and the percentage of part-time operators.

The above analysis is based on the actual wages reported by survey respondents. In an effort to control for differences in labor costs in each area, the research team adjusted these actual wages to reflect typical wages in each area. As noted above, these adjustments were made using information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' May 2008 Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. Median hourly wages for Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations was used to make the adjustments.

Figure 5-3 shows that adjusting starting wages to account for different prevailing wage rates among areas does not improve the association of wages with turnover. Interestingly, using the adjusted wages does not improve the association with turnover; instead, it obscures the association.

Health Care Coverage, Provider Type, and Turnover

Figure 5-4 shows the relationship between health care coverage and turnover. There does appear to be a tendency for systems that pay a higher percentage of health care to have lower turnover on average. Regression analysis finds that the relationship is almost statistically significant (with 91% confidence) despite the obviously wide scatter of observations. Since public systems have both lower turnover and higher employer contributions to health care, it is possible that some of the apparent influence of paid health benefits

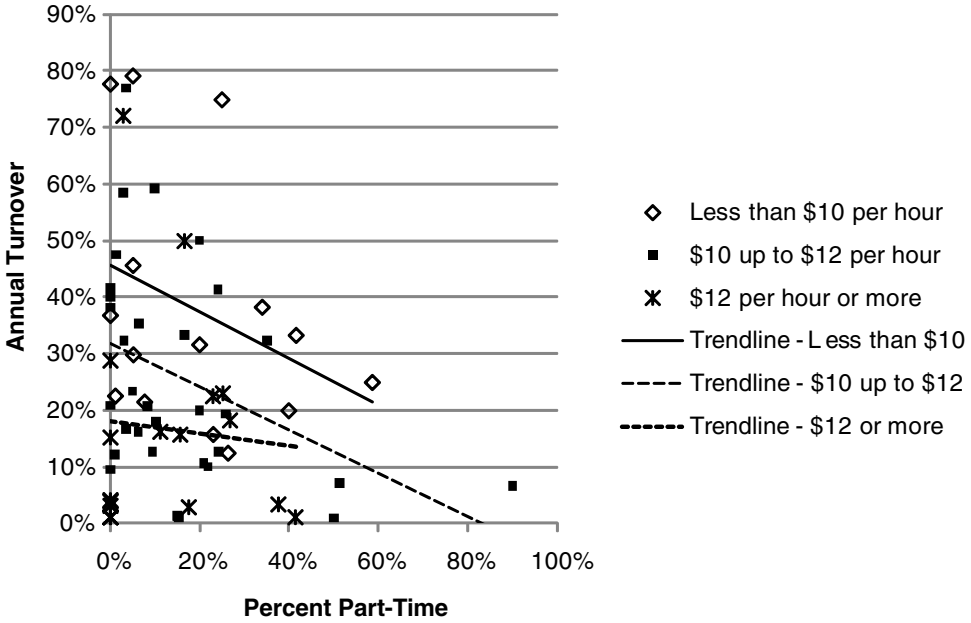


Figure 5-2. Starting wage, part-time percentage, and turnover.

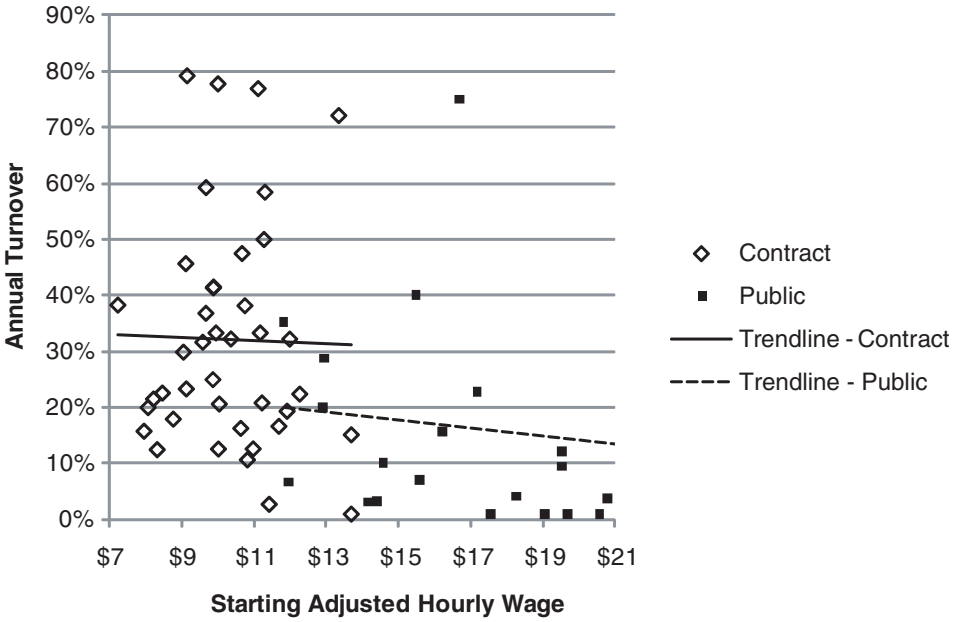


Figure 5-3. Adjusted starting wage, public/private providers, and turnover.

could be related to employment by a public operator. Figure 5-5 shows the relationship between paid health benefits and turnover after controlling for public versus contract operation. While there is still some apparent relationship, it is much reduced and not statistically significant at all.

The influence of health coverage could be partly obscured by difficulties in the data collection process. The questionnaire asked for employee contribution to health care coverage, but examination of responses indicated that some systems misunderstood the question and reported employer contribution instead. Wherever possible, these errors were corrected, but some cases could not be confirmed and others could have gone undetected. (In the analysis, the employer contribution has been used and calculated as 100% minus the employee contribution.)

Summary of Findings

The analysis of national survey data does show a strong connection between wages and turnover. The models suggest an average reduction in turnover of between 3.5% and 5.1% for every $1.00 increase in starting wage.

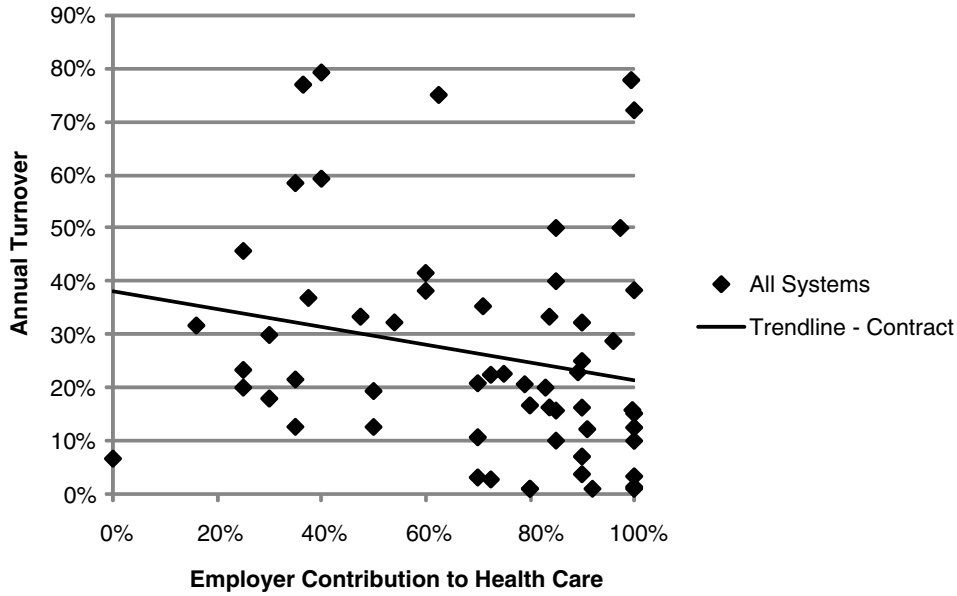


Figure 5-4. Health coverage and turnover.

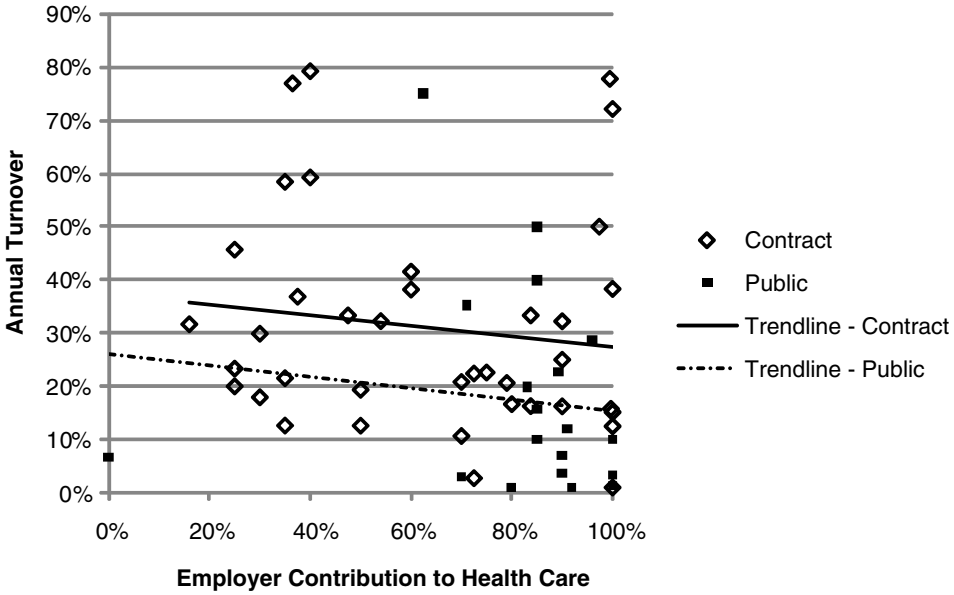


Figure 5-5. Health coverage, public/contract providers, and turnover.

While there is a strong connection, differences in starting wages appear to only explain 20% to 21% of the variation in turnover rates. Clearly, while pay rates are important, there are many other factors that affect turnover.

Of the other factors tested in this analysis, the percentage of part-time operators and the type of entity appear to be significant. The analysis suggests that, on average, turnover is lowered by about 3.5% for every 10% reduction in the percentage of part-time operators employed. Employment by a public entity also appears to affect turnover. Controlling for wages, public entities appear to have turnover that is 10% lower than private companies providing ADA paratransit service.

The analysis found that turnover is also impacted somewhat by the percent of employer contribution to health care coverage. This relationship was not as significant as expected, however.

While this analysis begins to explore the relationship between compensation and turnover, more analysis is needed. Research is needed to identify and quantify the other factors that account for differences in turnover. The underlying reasons why public entities experience lower turnover also needs further study. Given that the qualitative information suggests that health care coverage is more significant than this initial analysis indicates, more research is needed to document the impacts of health care coverage on turnover.

CHAPTER 6

Tenure and Performance

It is also commonly felt that if vehicle operators can be retained and are satisfied in their jobs, improved performance should be the end result. The added experience on the job should allow operators to be more efficient. "The right" operators, working in a supportive environment and satisfied with their jobs, should also help to ensure that higher quality service is provided.

While the above seems obvious, little actual research could be found to document that improved performance does in fact result from lowering turnover and retaining vehicle operators. To begin to document the extent to which performance is influenced by tenure, two ADA paratransit systems were selected and studied in detail. One system was the DART program in Dallas, Texas. The second was the LYNX program in Orlando, Florida. These two systems were selected for the following reasons:

- They were large enough to provide a pool of vehicle operators with an adequate number of operators in various tenure groups;
- They had moderate to high turnover, which was assurance that there would be enough new operators to make an effective comparison; and
- They utilized state-of-the-art paratransit software that allowed for the creation of special queries on operator and trip data.

At the time of the study, the DART system in Dallas employed a total of 339 ADA paratransit vehicle operators and reported an annual post-training turnover rate of 48%. The LYNX program in Orlando employed 247 ADA paratransit vehicle operators and reported an annual post-training turnover rate of 70%.

These systems were also selected to provide some contrast in operating designs. The DART service is centrally scheduled with contracted vehicle operations. Reservations, scheduling and dispatching are performed in-house by DART with its own public employees. Vehicle operators are hired and supervised by a contracted private carrier. The LYNX service is a single-contractor, turnkey operation. A private contractor performs all aspects of service delivery including reservations, scheduling, dispatching, and vehicle operations.

With the cooperation of these systems, productivity was compared for similar runs performed by operators with different levels of tenure. On-time performance was also compared based on operator tenure. And the rates of complaints per operator per month were calculated for different tenure groups. Following are descriptions of the methodologies used and the outcomes obtained.

Impacts of Tenure on Productivity

Methodology

At each system, a week of reconciled trip data was obtained. The data was sorted by day and then by run number. For each run, the number of trips provided and the number of vehicle-revenue-hours was extracted so that productivity (trips per revenue-hour) could be calculated. The employee number of the vehicle operator who performed the run was also obtained.

To control for inherent differences that might exist between certain types of runs, the run structure was also reviewed with the lead scheduler at each system. Each lead scheduler was asked to identify runs that might be expected to have different productivities—for example, split runs that operate only during peak hours versus straight runs that continue through off-peak periods, versus late evening or weekend runs. A code was assigned to each run to indicate its characteristics.

Next, a list of vehicle operators was obtained showing the dates of hire. Using the dates of hire, the number of months of tenure of each operator was calculated. This list was then combined with the run/trip data so that it was possible to determine the productivity achieved by each operator and the tenure of the operator that performed each run.

Runs were then sorted based on type and operator tenure groups. The run descriptions were unique to each system. A similar grouping of operators was also done. The tenure groupings chosen for the analysis at both systems were the following:

- Less than 3 months of tenure,
- 3 to 5 months of tenure,
- 6 to 12 months of tenure,
- 13 to 24 months of tenure,
- 25 to 60 months of tenure, and
- 61+ months of tenure.

The average productivity achieved on all runs performed by operators in each tenure group was then calculated for each grouping of run type.

Productivity Results—DART, Dallas, TX

During the week of March 1–7, 2009, in Dallas, TX, a total of 1,614 individual runs were performed. Vehicle operator information was successfully linked to all but one of these runs.

The review of the run structure for the DART system identified 22 different types of runs that could have different productivity characteristics. These included weekday versus weekend runs, morning, midday and afternoon runs, split and straight runs, and back-up runs which DART termed "protects." There were also special runs that had been created to provide dedicated service to individuals going to and from a major medical facility, termed the Parkland Shuttle runs.

Table 6-1 shows the average productivity and total number of runs in the sample week for each run grouping. It also shows the number of runs performed by operators in each tenure group. For many run types, there were not enough runs for the week to provide an adequate sample of operators in that tenure group. For example, even though there were 40 weekday, midday straight runs, there was only one run performed by an operator with less than 3 months experience, and only two runs performed by operators in the 3- to 5- and 6- to 12-month tenure groups.

Several run groupings did, however, have enough operators in each tenure group to allow for a reasonable comparison of average productivities achieved. These run groupings included the following:

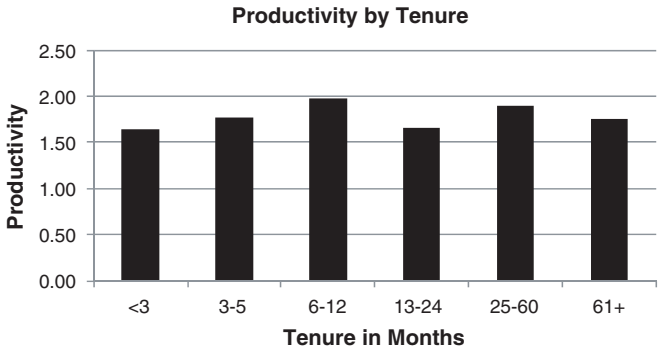
- Weekday AM Splits (266 runs);
- Weekday AM Straights (457 runs);
- Weekday PM Splits (330 runs); and
- Weekday PM Straights (264 runs).

Figures 6-1 to 6-4, and the associated data tables, show the productivities by tenure group for each of these types of runs.

For the two "straight run" groups, higher productivities were generally achieved by operators with more than 2 years

Table 6-1. Number of runs by type and operator tenure group, DART, Dallas, TX, March 1–7, 2009.

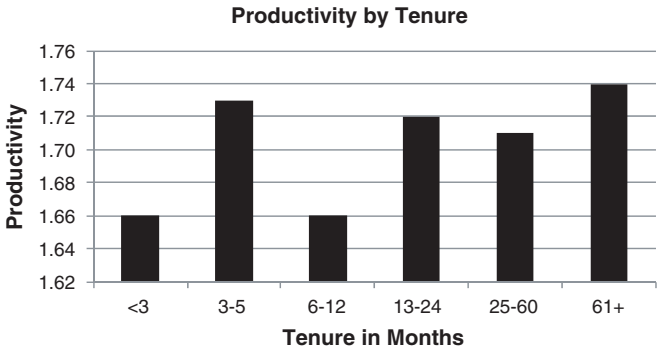
Run Description	Average Productivity	# of Runs by Tenure Group (in Months)						Total Runs
		<3	3-5	5-12	13-24	25-60	61+	
Weekday AM Splits	1.80	26	19	31	33	83	74	266
Weekday AM Straights	1.73	29	30	16	34	33	315	457
Weekday Midday Splits	1.81	1	0	2	3	4	0	10
Weekday Midday Straights	1.66	1	2	2	0	4	31	40
Weekday PM Splits	1.90	34	32	40	45	86	93	330
Weekday PM Straights	1.67	26	37	27	38	55	81	264
Weekday Evening	1.18	5	1	3	10	0	6	25
Weekday "Protects"	1.12	3	3	8	8	9	14	45
Saturday AM Splits	1.34	3	3	3	0	0	1	10
Saturday AM Straights	1.40	6	6	5	5	3	8	33
Saturday Midday Splits	1.70	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Saturday Midday Straights	1.67	7	3	1	3	1	1	16
Saturday PM Splits	1.52	2	3	2	0	1	1	9
Saturday PM Straights	1.64	1	0	3	1	0	1	6
Saturday Evening	1.40	3	6	1	2	0	5	17
Saturday "Protects"	1.03	1	0	2	0	0	1	4
Sunday AM Splits	1.52	4	1	0	0	1	0	6
Sunday AM Straights	1.48	9	8	3	4	4	4	32
Sunday PM Splits	1.58	2	1	0	0	0	1	4
Sunday PM Straights	1.36	3	8	0	1	0	2	14
Sunday "Protects"	1.28	1	0	1	0	1	3	6
Parkland Shuttle	1.50	1	0	5	1	3	7	17
Totals	**1.69**	**168**	**164**	**156**	**188**	**289**	**649**	**1614**



# Runs	Tenure	Productivity
26	<3	1.65
19	3-5	1.77
31	6-12	1.98
33	13-24	1.66
83	25-60	1.90
74	61+	1.76

Total Runs: 266

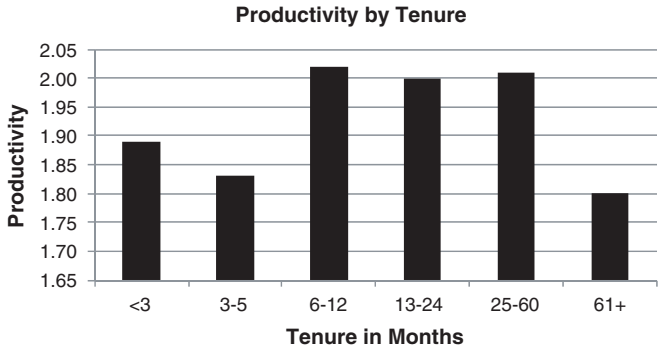
Figure 6-1. Productivity by vehicle operator tenure group, weekday AM split runs, DART ADA paratransit service, March 1–7, 2009.



# Runs	Tenure	Productivity
29	<3	1.66
30	3-5	1.73
16	6-12	1.66
34	13-24	1.72
33	25-60	1.71
315	61+	1.74

Total Runs: 457

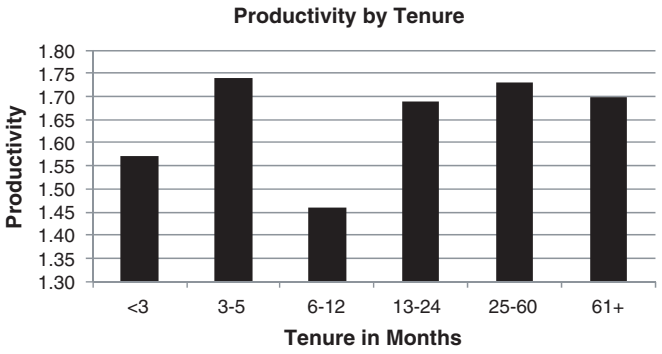
Figure 6-2. Productivity by vehicle operator tenure group, weekday AM straight runs, DART ADA paratransit service, March 1–7, 2009.



# Runs	Tenure	Productivity
34	<3	1.89
32	3-5	1.83
40	6-12	2.02
45	13-24	2.00
86	25-60	2.01
93	61+	1.80

Total Runs: 330

Figure 6-3. Productivity by vehicle operator tenure group, weekday PM split runs, DART ADA paratransit service, March 1–7, 2009.



# Runs	Tenure	Productivity
26	<3	1.57
37	3-5	1.74
27	6-12	1.46
38	13-24	1.69
55	25-60	1.73
81	61+	1.70

Total Runs: 264

Figure 6-4. Productivity by vehicle operator tenure group, weekday PM straight runs, DART ADA paratransit service, March 1–7, 2009.

of experience. The group of operators with 3 to 5 months of experience also performed well on these straight runs. Operators with less than 3 months of experience and those with 6 to 12 months of experience performed at lower productivities. The largest group of long-term operators (315) who worked the AM straight runs had the highest productivity in that group. Longer-term operators working PM straight runs also had among the highest productivity in that group. The longer term operators working split runs, however, performed at only a moderate productivity on morning runs and at a low productivity on the afternoon runs.

Combining the results for the two groups of split runs (AM and PM) indicates that operators with 6 months to 5 years of experience were about 8% to 9% more productive than operators with less than 6 months experience.

For the two groups of straight runs, the pivot point appears to be at about one year of experience. In these two groups, operators with one to 5 years of experience were about 5% more productive than those with less than one year of experience.

The fact that it took longer for operators to be as productive on straight runs could be due to the fact that these runs, which go through the midday, often have fewer subscription trips than morning and afternoon split runs that operate more in the peak. Vehicle operators would be making more non-subscription pick-ups throughout the service area and it would take longer to learn the entire area. Another possibility is that the operators with the longest tenure had an idea of which runs had more moderate workloads (e.g., smaller subscription trip groups), and may have chosen those in the run picks.

Complete results for all types of runs at DART, including those presented in this section, are provided in the table in Appendix B.

Productivity Results—LYNX, Orlando, FL

A similar analysis was performed with data from the LYNX ADA paratransit service in Orlando, FL. Data from the week of April 19–25, 2009, was used. During this week, a total of 786 runs were performed and vehicle operator tenure information was successfully linked to all runs.

A standard run structure using staggered straight runs was used. The only real distinction in terms of run type was whether runs were scheduled for weekdays versus Saturdays or Sundays. Therefore, instead of categorizing runs by types, the lead scheduler was asked to give each run an expected productivity rating based on the number and type of subscription trips and "program" trips assigned as well as his general knowledge of the runs. The categorization also depended on whether runs were typically assigned to the urban area or more rural parts of the service area. Using a list of weekday runs, the lead scheduler categorized each run based on expected productivity using the following general categories:

- Low productivity,
- Medium-low productivity,
- Medium productivity,
- Medium-high productivity, and
- High productivity.

Saturday and Sunday runs were then also considered separate groups.

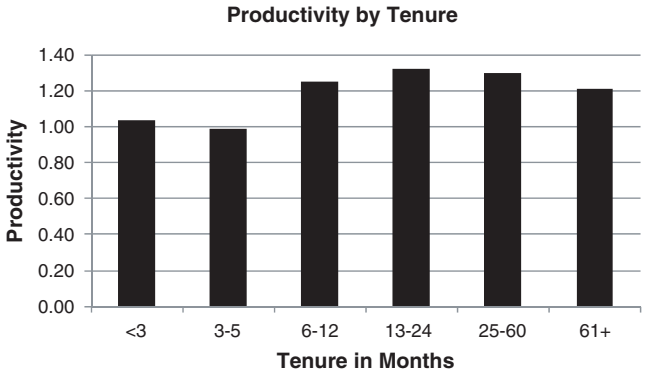
Table 6-2 shows the breakdown of the 786 runs for the sample week by expected weekday and weekend, and weekday productivity category. It also shows the average actual productivity for each run category. As shown in Table 6-2, the lead scheduler's opinion about the expected productivities of each run was quite accurate. The average actual productivities do in fact increase from the "Weekday Low" category to the "Weekday High" category. Saturday runs had an average productivity that was almost the same as the "Weekday Medium" runs. Sunday runs had an average productivity that was between the "Weekday Low" and "Weekday Medium-Low" levels.

As shown in Table 6-2, the only two categories that had a sufficient distribution over all operator tenure groups were the runs with expected productivities of "Weekday Medium" and "Weekday Medium-High." Figures 6-5 and 6-6 show the results of the productivity analysis for each of these categories of runs.

For each run group, the results show significantly improved productivity for operators with greater tenure. In the "Weekday Medium" group, operators with 6 months to 5 years of

Table 6-2. Number of runs by anticipated productivity and operator tenure group, LYNX, Orlando, FL, April 19–25, 2009.

Run Description	Average Productivity	# of Runs by Tenure Group (in Months)						Total Runs
		<3	3-5	6-12	13-24	25-60	61+	
Weekday Low	0.95	1	0	15	12	7	6	41
Weekday Medium-Low	1.17	0	0	11	15	4	0	30
Weekday Medium	1.22	75	13	54	71	109	74	396
Weekday Medium-High	1.36	17	8	20	48	58	18	169
Weekday High	1.51	2	0	11	27	14	8	62
Saturday	1.23	10	6	14	18	5	7	60
Sunday	1.07	6	2	9	6	3	2	28
Totals	**1.25**	**111**	**29**	**134**	**197**	**200**	**115**	**786**



# Runs	Tenure	Productivity
75	<3	1.04
13	3-5	0.99
54	6-12	1.25
71	13-24	1.32
109	25-60	1.30
74	61+	1.21

Total Runs: 396

Figure 6-5. Productivity by vehicle operator tenure group, weekday medium runs, LYNX ADA paratransit service, April 19–25, 2009.

tenure performed at an average productivity or 1.29, compared to an average productivity of only 1.02 for operators with less than 6 months of experience. This represents a 34% increase in productivity. Average productivity for operators with more than 5 years of experience dropped to 1.21—still 17% higher than operators with less than 6 months of experience but 12% less than operators in the 6 month to 5 year tenure category.

For the "Weekday Medium-High" group, operators with 6 months to 5 years of tenure performed at an average productivity or 1.40, compared to an average productivity of only 1.18 for operators with less than 6 months of experience. This represents a 19% increase in productivity. Average productivity for operators with more than 5 years of experience dropped only slightly to 1.37—still 16% higher than operators with less than 6 months of experience, and only 2% less than operators in the 6 month to 5 year tenure category.

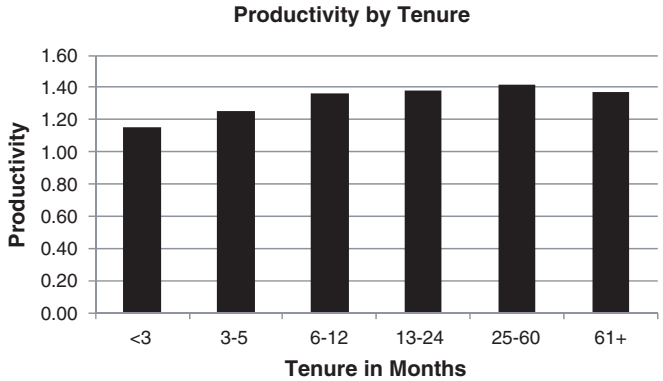
Figure 6-7 shows all weekday runs for the Orlando service and the productivities achieved by operators in each tenure group. Operators with 6 months to 5 years of tenure performed at an average productivity of 1.39, compared to an average productivity of only 1.02 for operators with less than 6 months of experience. This represents a 24% increase in productivity. Average productivity for operators with more than 5 years experience dropped only slightly to 1.26—still 19% higher than operators with less than 6 months of experience and only 4% less than operators in the 6 month to 5 year tenure category.

Complete results for all types of runs at LYNX, including those presented in this section, are provided in the table in Appendix C.

Impacts of Tenure On On-Time Performance

Methodology

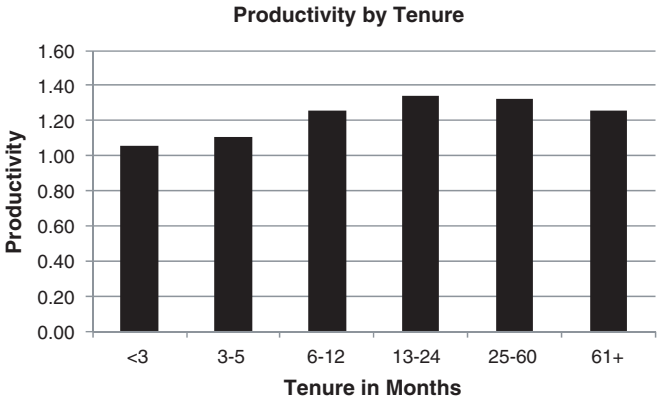
The levels of on-time performance achieved by operators in each tenure group were also analyzed during both case study sites. On-time performance was calculated for each run for the sample week. This was done by identifying the number of trips with pick-ups that were performed late compared to the total number of pick-ups on each run. The operators who performed each run were then identified. Using their dates of hire, their tenure in months was then calculated. This tenure information was then attached to each run. On-time



# Runs	Tenure	Productivity
17	<3	1.15
8	3-5	1.25
20	6-12	1.37
48	13-24	1.38
58	25-60	1.42
18	61+	1.37

Total Runs: 166

Figure 6-6. Productivity by vehicle operator tenure group, weekday medium-high runs, LYNX ADA paratransit service, April 19–25, 2009.



# Runs	Tenure	Productivity
95	<3	1.05
21	3-5	1.11
111	6-12	1.26
173	13-24	1.34
192	25-60	1.32
106	61+	1.26

Total Runs: 698

Figure 6-7. Productivity by vehicle operator tenure group, all weekday runs, LYNX ADA paratransit service, April 19–25, 2009.

performance for various tenure groups was then developed. As was done in the productivity analysis, the following tenure groups were used:

- Less than 3 months of tenure,
- 3 to 5 months of tenure,
- 6 to 12 months of tenure,
- 13 to 24 months of tenure,
- 25 to 60 months of tenure, and
- 61+ months of tenure.

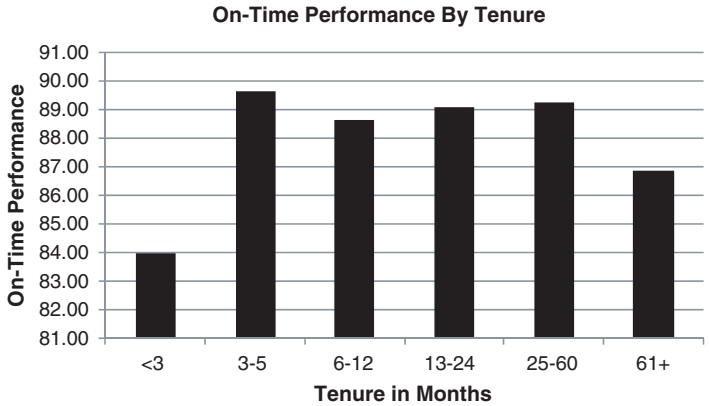
On-Time Performance Results—DART, Dallas, TX

Figure 6-8 shows the results of this analysis for the DART ADA paratransit service. As shown, on-time performance improved significantly for operators with 3 or more months of experience. Operators with less than 3 months experience performed 83.99% of all trips on-time. Operators with between 3 months and 5 years of experience performed between 88.67% and 89.64% of trips on-time. On-time performance decreased somewhat for operators with more than 5 years of experience, falling to 86.84%.

On-Time Performance Results—LYNX, Orlando, FL

The same analysis was performed for the LYNX ADA paratransit service in Orlando. Figure 6-9 shows on-time performance by operator tenure group for all weekday runs. Figure 6-10 then shows this information for the largest group of common runs—those categorized as "Weekday Medium" (or average productivity runs).

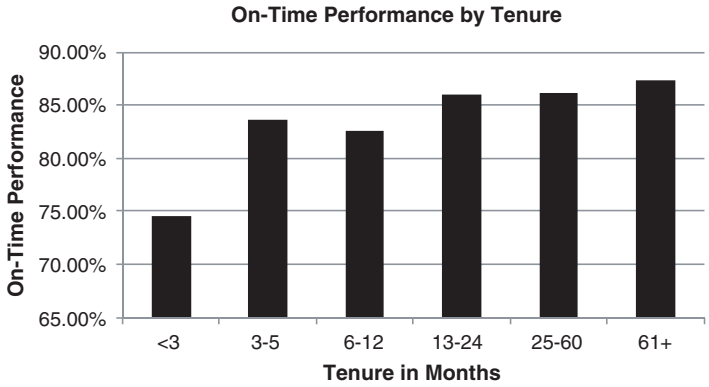
For all weekday runs, operators with less than 3 months experience were on-time for only 74.48% of all trips. Performance improved to 83.60% and 82.62% for operators with 3 to 5 months of experience and 6 to 12 months of experience. On-time performance continued to improve with experience—85.98% for operators with 13 to 24 months of experience, 86.20% for those with 25 to 60 months of experience, and 87.40% for those with more than 5 years of experience.



Tenure	On-Time Performance
<3	83.99
3-5	89.64
6-12	88.67
13-24	89.11
25-60	89.25
61+	86.84

Total Runs: 1560

Figure 6-8. On-time performance by operator tenure in months, all runs DART ADA paratransit service, March 1–7, 2009.



# Runs	Tenure	On-Time Performance
95	<3	74.48%
21	3-5	83.60%
111	6-12	82.62%
173	13-24	85.98%
192	25-60	86.20%
106	61+	87.40%

Total Runs: 698

Figure 6-9. On-time performance by operator tenure in months, all weekday runs LYNX ADA paratransit service, April 19–25, 2009.

For the "Weekday Medium" runs, which were the largest number of similar type runs, the difference in performance was even more pronounced. Operators with less than 3 months experience were on-time for only 77.36% of all trips. Operators with 3–5 months of experience performed slightly better with 80.15% of all trips on-time. With 6 to 12 months of experience, operators achieved 84.31% on-time performance. This then capped out at between 86.02% and 86.24% for operators with more than 1 year of experience.

Impacts of Tenure on Complaints

Methodology

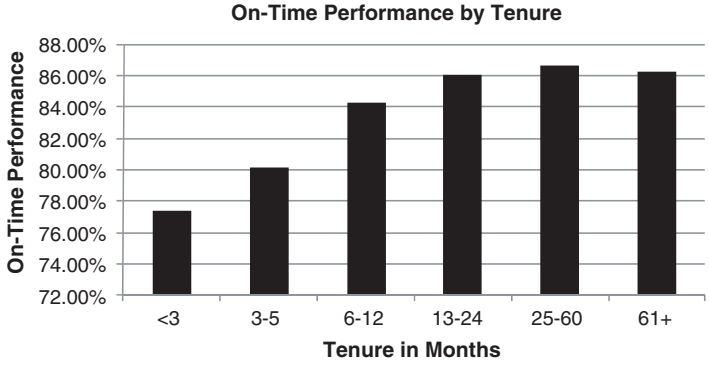
A second measure of service quality that was analyzed was operator-related complaints. At each system, several months of complaint data was reviewed. Complaints that were "operator-related" were selected. This included complaints such as improper assistance provided, rude conduct, unsafe driving, etc.

For each complaint, the operator was identified. The operator's tenure at the time of the complaint was then calculated by comparing the date of hire to the date of the complaint. Complaint rates were then calculated by comparing the number of complaints in each tenure grouping to the number of operators in each group. The ratios of complaints per operator per month were then compared for each tenure group.

Complaint Rate Results—DART, Dallas, TX

Six months of complaint data, from September 2008 through February 2009 was used for the analysis in Dallas, TX. A total of 459 operator-related complaints were analyzed. Figure 6-11 and Table 6-3 show the results of this analysis.

As shown in Table 6-3, the rate of complaints increased with operator tenure. Only 7% of the operators with less than 3 months of experience had complaints, and the rate for this group was only 0.03 complaints per operator per month. Operators with 3–5 months experience had a complaint rate between 0.12 and 0.17 complaints per operator per month. Operators with 1 to 5 years of experience had a complaint rate between 0.19 and 0.27 complaints per month. And operators with more than 5 years of experience had complaint rates of 0.21 complaints per operator per month.



# Runs	Tenure	On-Time Performance
75	<3	77.36%
13	3-5	80.15%
54	6-12	84.31%
71	13-24	86.02%
109	25-60	86.65%
74	61+	86.24%

Total Runs: 396

Figure 6-10. On-time performance by operator tenure in months, weekday medium runs, LYNX ADA paratransit service, April 19–25, 2009.

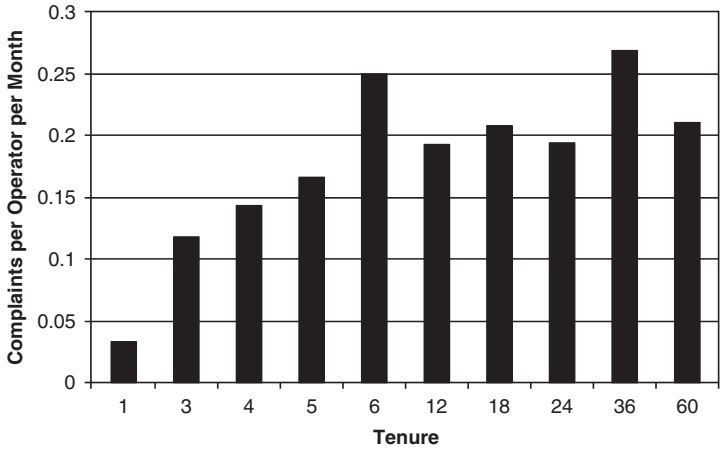


Figure 6-11. Complaint rates by operator tenure (in months), DART ADA paratransit service, September 2008 through February 2009.

Complaint Rate Results—LYNX, Orlando, FL

Eleven months of complaint data was analyzed in Orlando. A total of 277 operator-related complaints were identified. Figure 6-12 and Table 6-4 show the results of the analysis. The results in this second case study site were very different. As shown, the rate of complaints decreased dramatically as operators gained more experience. Operators with less than 3 months experience had a complaint rate of 0.08 complaints per operator per month. This decreased steadily to 0.02 to 0.03 for operators with 5 to 7 months of experience. Operators with more than 8 months of experience had a complaint rate of only 0.01 to 0.02 complaints per operator per month.

Given these dramatically different results for the two case study sites, further research in this area is clearly needed.

Summary of Findings

This analysis suggests that greater job experience does translate into increased productivity. In Dallas, operators performing split shifts who had at least 6 months of experience were 8% to 9% more productive than operators working similar shifts who had less than 6 months of experience. Operators working straight shifts and who had from 1 to 5 years of experience were 5% more productive than those working similar sifts who had 1 year or less of experience.

In Orlando, the difference was much greater. Operators with at least 6 months of experience were 24% more productive than those with less than 6 months of experience.

In both systems studied, productivity continued to increase with experience, but a slight drop-off in productivity was documented in both systems for operators with more than 5 years of experience. Operators with more than 5 years of experience were still, however, more productive than those with less than 6 months experience. This drop-off in longer-term productivity could point to the need for ongoing training and incentives.

Information from both systems studied also indicated marked improvements in on-time performance with increased

Table 6-3. Complaints by operator tenure, DART ADA paratransit service, September 2008 through February 2009.

Tenure in Months	Complaints per Driver	Months of Data	Complaints per Driver per Month	Percent of Drivers with Complaints
61+	1.26	6	0.21	55%
36-60	1.61	6	0.27	50%
24-35	1.17	6	0.19	42%
18-23	1.25	6	0.21	58%
12-17	1.15	6	0.19	58%
6-11	1.50	6	0.25	60%
5	1.00	6	0.17	36%
4	0.71	5	0.14	43%
3	0.47	4	0.12	29%
<3	0.07	2	0.03	7%

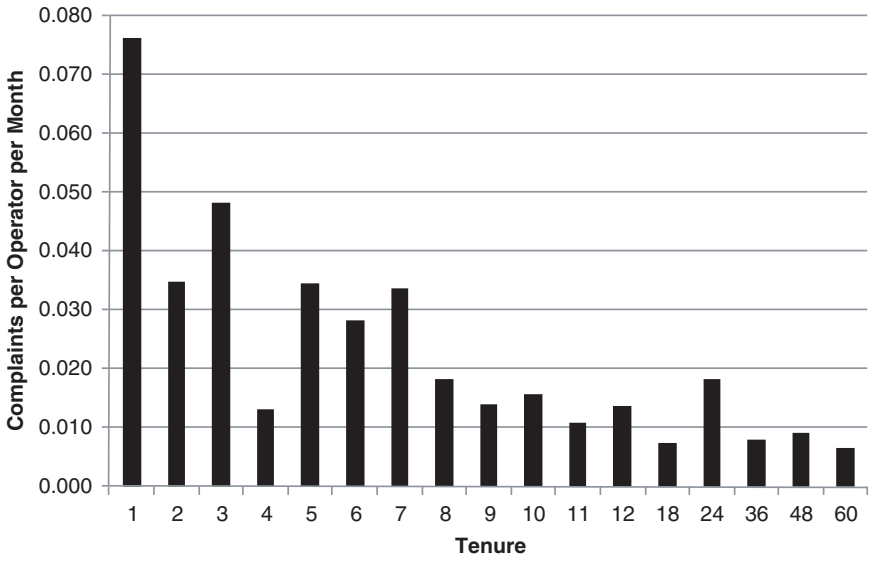


Figure 6-12. Complaint rates by operator tenure (in months), LYNX ADA paratransit service, July 2008 through May 2009.

experience. In Dallas, on-time performance was almost 5 percentage points higher for operators with more than three months of experience compared to operators with less than 3 months of experience. On-time performance did not vary much after operators had at least 3 months of experience.

In Orlando, on-time performance improved by between 3 and 8 percentage points once operators had at least 3 months of experience. On-time performance continued to increase with experience, eventually operators with the most experience were between 9 and 13 percentage points higher compared to those who were new to the job.

The review of complaint rates produced mixed results. In Orlando, operators with more experience provided service with fewer incidents of complaints. In Dallas, complaint rates increased with job tenure. These mixed results indicate that more research is needed in this area.

Table 6-4. Complaints by operator tenure, LYNX ADA paratransit service, July 2008 through May 2009.

Tenure (Months)	# of Complaints	# of Drivers	# of Drivers with Complaints	Complaints per Driver	Months of Data	Complaints per Driver per Month	% of Drivers with Complaints
1	8	105	7	0.08	1	0.08	6.67%
2	6	86	6	0.07	2	0.03	6.98%
3	11	76	10	0.14	3	0.05	13.16%
4	4	76	4	0.05	4	0.01	5.26%
5	13	75	11	0.17	5	0.03	14.67%
6	12	71	10	0.17	6	0.03	14.08%
7	17	72	13	0.24	7	0.03	18.06%
8	9	62	8	0.15	8	0.02	12.90%
9	9	71	9	0.13	9	0.01	12.68%
10	12	77	11	0.16	10	0.02	14.29%
11	9	76	7	0.12	11	0.01	9.21%
12	53	349	42	0.15	11	0.01	12.03%
18	18	219	18	0.08	11	0.01	8.22%
24	47	234	40	0.20	11	0.02	17.09%
36	13	150	12	0.09	11	0.01	8.00%
48	13	129	12	0.10	11	0.01	9.30%
60	23	318	19	0.07	11	0.01	5.97%
TOTAL:	277	2246	239				

CHAPTER 7

The Cost of Turnover

As part of the study, research was conducted to document the full cost of vehicle operator recruitment and training. The cost of recruitment and training is one of the elements of the model developed in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4-7). A more complete understanding of the cost of recruitment and training will allow managers of ADA paratransit operators to make more informed workforce decisions—particularly the trade-offs between better compensation and recruitment and training costs.

Documentation on the full cost of recruitment and training was developed by studying three selected ADA paratransit operations. The three paratransit operations included in the research and analysis are the following:

- Charlotte Area Transit System's (CATS) Special Transportation Service (STS);
- The MV Transportation contract operation in Denver (under contract to the Denver RTD, Regional Transportation District); and
- The Veolia Transportation contract operation in Baltimore (under contract to MTA, the Maryland Transit Administration).

These three operations were selected for the following reasons:

- They reflected mid-sized to large paratransit operations: CATS has a fleet size of 85 vehicles (72 peak pullout) and 84 vehicle operators; MV in Denver has a fleet size of 157 vehicles and 196 operators; and Veolia in Baltimore has a fleet size of 160 vehicles and 213 operators.
- They had variation in annual turnover rates: CATS at 14%, Veolia at 52%, and MV at 57%.
- They had variation in service design, with MV in Denver and Veolia in Baltimore representing private contracted operations, and CATS' STS representing an in-house, public operation.

Methodology

A spreadsheet tool was first developed to gather cost data and operator applicant/trainee data. The spreadsheet was designed to capture both labor and other direct costs in four general areas: (1) recruitment, (2) interviewing, (3) screening, and (4) training. Examples of the types of costs incurred in each area are presented in Table 7-1.

Contact persons were identified at each of the three systems. The spreadsheet tool was sent to them and follow-up calls were made to review and answer questions about the spreadsheet and information needed. Once initial data were provided, a second call was made to review and clarify the information provided. Revisions were made as needed. Revised spreadsheets were then sent back to the system contacts for a final review and verification. In the case of CATS, a member of the research team also visited the STS staff in Charlotte to help gather data from the city.

For recruitment and advertising, data was gathered on any staff time spent on job fairs, including preparation and/or attendance and time spent on composing advertisements seeking vehicle operators. Direct costs in the recruitment and advertising category included ad placement fees or other advertising costs, such as placing stickers on buses. Signing bonuses for new operators and referral bonuses for current operators were also included in this cost category.

Data gathered for the applicant interviewing cost category included staff time for application review, interview scheduling, and the time spent conducting the interviews themselves, both at the management and supervisory levels.

For screening, labor hours associated with processing the screening paperwork were included. Direct costs in this category included DMV driving record check fees, criminal background checks, drug testing, and physicals.

The training category included labor costs for all staff members participating in training for new vehicle operators, including primary classroom instructors, specialized training

Table 7-1. Examples of recruitment and training cost elements.

	Labor Costs	Direct Costs
Recruitment Costs	Attending job fairs Composing ads	Ad placement Advertising stickers Signing/referral bonuses
Interviewing Costs	Reviewing applications Interviewing applicants	
Screening Costs	Processing checks Drug testing	DMV/background checks
Initial Training Costs	Classroom trainer BTW trainer Trainee wages	Trainer (contracted) Course material

instructors (i.e., wheelchair-lift instructors, defensive driving instructors, and sensitivity instructors), and in-vehicle instructors. Any time spent by management staff in the classroom was also included as was staff time spent developing curriculum for training. Training wages for new operators were also included in labor costs for this category. Direct costs for training included any contracted operator training with outside organizations and purchase of course materials, if external.

All cost data was then subtotaled by category, giving the subtotal spent on recruitment, interviewing applicants, screening applicants, and training. These figures were divided by the number of applicants, applicants screened, applicants interviewed, trainees, and graduates hired to result in the cost per individual in each category.

All costs and applicant/trainee/operator information was based on the first 9 months of Calendar Year 2009. This information and cost was then annualized. Labor costs (where needed) were annualized based on a 2,080 hour, 52-week work year. Similarly, direct costs were gathered for each unit and multiplied by the number of units per year. For example, the cost of one ad placement was recorded and multiplied by the number of ads placed per year. And finally, some costs were reported on a per-applicant basis. In order to annualize applicant/trainee/operator figures collected and get a handle on unit costs (per applicant and per operator), average annual numbers were collected in the following categories:

- Average total number of applicants recruited per year,
- Average number of applicants interviewed per year,
- Average number of applicants screened per year,
- Average number of trainees per year, and
- Average number of operators (trained graduates) hired per year.

Costs per applicant/trainee/operator were multiplied by the average annual figure to produce the average annual cost for a certain line in the budget. For instance, costs per interview, computed using the hours of staff time multiplied by hourly wage, were then multiplied by the number of applicants interviewed per year to reach the annual total spent.

Case Study Summaries

The following is information about each ADA paratransit system studied. Included in this section is information about the system structure and size, recruitment and retention efforts, and the cost and turnover data collected.

Charlotte Area Transit System Special Transportation Service

Introduction

The Charlotte Area Transit System's Special Transportation Service (CATS STS) has a fleet of 85 vehicles used in revenue service, with a peak pull-out of 72. Annual ridership totaled 239,400 trips in FY2009. Service is provided to Mecklenburg County residents living in the STS service area. STS currently employs 61 full-time, 21 part-time, and 2 full-time temporary operators, for a total of 84 operators.

Vehicle operator starting pay was recently increased from $12.80 per hour to $14.41 per hour. Operators receive 10 days paid vacation to start, plus 9 paid holidays. Individual health care coverage is available with a $14.76 employee contribution per week, and family coverage is provided with an employee contribution of $96.17 per week.

During this past year, CATS received 250 operator applications and interviewed 25 of them (10%). These 25 were narrowed down to 20 after the interviews took place. As a result of the screening activities, the number of applicants was then reduced to 12. These 12 operators were trained and successfully completed the training, and all 12 were eventually hired as vehicle operators.

The calculated attrition rate for this operation is hence 14% (12 new operators divided by 84 total operators).

Recruitment and Advertising

STS does not advertise or recruit, except to place a job ad on the city's website. Individuals can apply on the city's website or walk in to CATS or STS facilities. The STS telephone number is on all CATS STS buses, and STS typically maintains a large pool of applicants.

The City of Charlotte Human Resources (HR) handles the website and forwards applications for STS operators. Since Charlotte Human Resources manages all city hiring, the time spent solely on STS job postings per year was considered negligible. Further, the HR department was not able to separate out the time for STS listings from all other job postings.

Applicant Interviews

STS receives an average of 250 applicants per year for vehicle operator positions, based on FY2008 and FY2009 data. The General Manager's assistant reviews the applications, and the Assistant General Manager narrows this pool of applicants, typically to twice the number of available operator positions. Annually, this averages to approximately 25 applicant interviews. Reviewing applications takes up approximately two hours of time each week for the General Manager's assistant.

The General Manager's (GM) assistant schedules the interviews and spends time with each interviewee reviewing the basics of driving an STS bus. All of this takes approximately 45 minutes for each interviewee. The Assistant GM spends about an hour and a half with each interviewee. Interviews include a discussion with the Assistant GM and a written test. In total, STS spent $5,400 in labor costs on interviewing applicants, averaging $216 per applicant interviewed and $450 per graduate hired.

Applicant Screening

Following the interview, the General Manager's assistant conducts screening. STS requires a CDL permit before an interview. They also conduct DMV driving record checks—any applicant with 6 or more points on their record is eliminated from the pool. They pay for physicals for potential hires, and also pay for required drug testing, which cost $128.50 and $15, respectively. STS uses the website Hiring Ease to conduct all other background checks, including looking at North Carolina and other states criminal records, federal criminal records, national sex offender listings, and social security numbers. These checks total $45.50 per applicant screened.

During screening, the staff spends approximately 45 minutes on each applicant on background checks and accompanying paperwork. Of the 25 applicants interviewed each year, only 20 are screened. Total costs for applicant screening, including labor costs and background check fees, are approximately $4,747. With 20 applicants screened, the cost per applicant screened is $237.37.

Included under this heading is additional paperwork required in the hiring process, including medical benefits, tax forms, and various other required forms. This paperwork is all completed before training begins, and the assistant to the GM helps each new hire with its completion. Approximately 1.5 hours is spent per new hire. With 12 new hires per year, approximately 18 hours are spent per year.

Training

STS reported that it has not had a trainee drop out of training in recent years. STS does use a 6-month probationary period for new operators, and two operators have been dismissed during this period in the last 2 years. Since this is after the completion of initial training, it was considered part of post-training turnover. Therefore, the number of graduates hired per year is considered equal to the number of new operators trained (trainees) per year. In STS's case, this figure is 12.

STS holds approximately three training sessions per year with between three and five trainees per session. During the average 4 weeks of training, trainees spend nearly all of the first week in the classroom. Approximately one-third of the second week is spent in the classroom, and the third and fourth weeks are spent almost entirely on the road with operator trainers. STS staff reported spending just under 25 hours in the classroom training new operators. An additional 1.5 hours of training per session comes from the Metrolina Council for the Blind, which provides disability sensitivity instruction at no cost. There is an additional eight hours of Smith System defensive driving, given by the Safety and Security division of CATS. Though the wages for this staff member do not come from the STS budget, they are included here as part of the total training costs.

The training hours do not include a 6-hour city orientation course given by the City of Charlotte to all new employees. Charlotte Human Resources conducts this training in large groups, and the training occurs whether or not there are STS employees attending. Therefore, STS operator trainees do not add additional costs to the City for their attendance. STS does not pay for this instruction.

STS conducts the entirety of its behind-the-wheel operator training on regularly scheduled routes, with operator trainees transporting the passengers during their first time behind the wheel. Also in the vehicle for approximately 80 hours of behind-the-wheel training is an operator trainer, who submits daily evaluations to the primary instructor marking a trainee's strengths and areas for improvement. This method results in no additional instruction costs, since operator trainers are operating their regularly scheduled routes. Operator trainees are paid wages for their training hours on the road. Operator trainers are not paid more than other operators and do not work any hours for training beyond their regularly scheduled routes.

Finally, the primary instructor rides along with the operator trainees at the end of their behind-the-wheel training.

Approximately six staff hours are spent, in addition to the operator trainee wages, during this supervisor release testing.

Operator trainees are paid their regular wages during training. Approximately 120 hours are spent in training. With approximately 12 trainees per year, the total trainee wage cost is $20,750.

The primary instructor is also the primary staff member who updates and adds to the training manual, as well as spends time thinking of ways to tweak the style or set-up of the training. The instructor discusses any changes with the GM, but the GM reported not spending any regular amount of time on training curriculum.

STS does not purchase books or other course materials. The primary instructor does use videos and other materials to support the primary training documents. Often, the instructor exchanges training materials with instructors in other municipalities, but it is a free exchange of materials.

Total training costs for instruction and trainee wages are $30,990 annually. With an average of 12 trainees per year, the average cost per trainee for STS is $2,582.50.

Total Costs

Charlotte's STS spent a total of $41,137 on operator applicant interviews, screening, and training, with three quarters of this total spent on training ($30,990). With an average of 12 graduates hired from this process, this total figure equates to $3,428 per graduate hired.

MV Transportation, Denver, CO

Introduction

MV Transportation is the largest contractor in Denver RTD's ADA paratransit system, called Access-a-Ride. MV operates 157 revenue vehicles with 196 full- and part-time vehicle operators.

Operators receive a $9.00 per hour training wage, $11.00 to start, and a 2% increase every 6 months. Fringe benefits include 1 week of paid vacation to start, individual health care coverage ($28.50 contribution every 2 weeks), individual and spouse coverage ($341 contribution every 2 weeks), and family health care coverage ($603.50 contribution every two weeks). Operators also are eligible for a performance bonus of $150 every two months if they are free of preventable accidents, preventable passenger injuries, and have a perfect attendance record.

During this past year, MV attracted 1,496 operator applications as a result of its recruitment efforts. Of these, 308 (21%) were interviewed. As a result of the interviews, the applicant pool was narrowed down to 224 applicants. DMV checks, criminal background checks, and drug testing of these 224 applicants resulted in 197 applicants being selected for training. Of the trainees, 111 (56%) successfully completing the training and were hired as vehicle operators.

The calculated attrition rate for this operation is hence 57% (111 new operators divided by 196 total operators).

Recruitment and Advertising

MV's recruitment and advertising activities in Denver include placing "operators wanted" ads in local newspapers, putting "operators wanted" stickers on each revenue vehicle in the fleet, and giving $250 referral bonuses to staff who bring MV applicants who are eventually hired. The monthly cost of advertising in newspapers is approximately $322 per month and $3,864 per year. The vehicle stickers each cost $7.50. Putting a sticker on each of the vehicles thus cost $1,178. Given that these stickers need to be periodically replaced because of wear and tear, they were treated as an annual cost, assuming that all stickers need to be replaced one per year. And, in the past year, 8 referral bonuses were awarded totaling $2,000 for the year. The total recruiting cost thus adds up to $7,042. The cost per applicant recruited works out to $4.71. The recruitment cost per operator hired is $64.

Applicant Interviews

Both of MV's senior managers review applications and interview applicants who "make the cut." MV estimates that an average of 4 hours per week (208 hours per year) were spent reviewing the 1,496 applications and that an average of 6 hours per week (312 hours per year) were spent interviewing the 308 applicants. At a wage rate of $31.25, this equates to an annual cost of $16,250. The cost per applicant interviewed works out to $53. The interviewing cost per operator hired is $147.

Applicant Screening

Following the interviews, 84 applicants were dropped from the process, leaving 224 applicants for whom screening is conducted. Screening consists of accessing DMV and criminal background checks and drug testing the applicants. The DMV checks cost $2.20 each. The criminal background checks cost $60 each. The drug testing costs $25.00 each. Collectively, these expenses total $87.20 per applicant, which when multiplied by 224 applicants yields an annual total direct cost of $19,533. Staff labor to process the checks and drug test results averaged about 1.5 hours per applicant, and hence 336 hours for the year. At a wage rate of $15.00 per hour, staff labor involved in the screening process totals $5,040 for the year. Together, the labor and direct costs total $24,573. The cost per applicant screened works out to $110. The screening cost per operator hired is $222.

Training

As a result of the screening process, the number of applicants who are selected to be trained was narrowed down from 224 to 197, with 27 failing the screening checks or drug tests.

MV has an operator trainer providing classroom training 8 hours a day, every weekday of the year. At a wage rate of $23.29 per hour, this works out to an annual total of $48,443. Twenty-four hours of behind-the-wheel (BTW) training is provided to each trainee, followed by an additional 38 hours of BTW training in revenue service (accompanied by a trainer). The hourly cost of the trainer for BTW is $12.25 per hour. In revenue service, the marginal cost is $1.00 per hour. Together, the BTW training costs a total of $65,404 for the 197 applicants. And most significantly, training wages were derived by multiplying the 102 hours of total training at $9.00 per hour for each trainee. This comes to a total of $180,846 for the year for all 197 applicants.

The sum of the annual training costs thus total $294,693. The cost per applicant trained works out to $1,497. The training cost per operator hired is $2,655.

Total Costs

MV in Denver spent $7,042 on recruiting, $16,250 on interviewing, $24,573 on screening, and $304,171 on initial training for a grand total of $352,036 per year. With 111 operator "graduates" hired from this process, this total figure equates to $3,181 per operator hired.

Veolia Transportation, Baltimore, MD

Introduction

Veolia Transportation is the largest contractor in Baltimore for the MTA's ADA Paratransit program, called Mobility. For this program, Veolia operates 160 revenue vehicles with 213 full- and part-time vehicle operators.

Veolia operators receive an $8.00 per hour training wage, and a $10.25 starting wage. Operators are also eligible for an extra $1.25 per hour that is paid each pay period if they have perfect attendance (no unscheduled call-outs or tardiness) during the period. Fringe benefits include 1 week of paid vacation to start and health care coverage (with a 25% employee contribution for individual or family coverage). Teams of operators are also eligible to earn performance bonuses that can be up to $375 per operator every 3 months (described in more detail in Chapter 8). Veolia also offers unlimited $250 referral bonuses, paid after the new hire completes 90 days on the job.

During this past year, Veolia received 1,800 operator applications as a result of its recruitment efforts. Of these, 415 (23%) were interviewed. As a result of the interviews, the applicant pool was narrowed down to 208 applicants. Screening activities, which involved a review of DMV records, criminal background checks, and drug testing results, resulted in a further reduction of 6 applicants, leaving 202 for training. Of the trainees, 110 (54%) successfully completing the training, and were hired as operators.

The calculated attrition rate for this operation is hence 52% (110 new operators divided by 213 total operators).

Recruitment and Advertising

The only approach with any significant cost used by Veolia to recruit in Baltimore is recruitment bonuses. Veolia gives a $250 referral bonus to any staff member who brings Veolia applicants who are eventually hired. In this past year, 10 referral bonuses were awarded, totaling $2,500 for the year. The cost per applicant recruited works out to $1.39, based on the 1,800 applicants. The recruitment cost per operator hired works out to $23.

Applicant Interviews

Veolia reported that the total cost of reviewing applications and interviewing applicants was $105,000. Based on this total annual cost, the cost per applicant interviewed works out to $253. The interviewing cost per operator hired is $955.

Applicant Screening

Following the interviews, approximately half of the applicants were dropped from the process, leaving 208 applicants for whom screening is conducted. Screening consists of reviewing the DMV record brought to the interview by the applicant and then conducting criminal background checks and a drug testing for each applicant. The criminal background checks cost $30.50 each. The drug testing costs $130 each. Together, these expenses total $160.50 per applicant, which when multiplied by the 208 applicants yields an annual total direct cost of $33,384. Staff labor to process the checks and drug test results was not reported. The reported cost per applicant screened works out to $161. The screening cost per operator is $303.

Training

As a result of the screening process, the number of applicants who are selected to be trained is winnowed down from 208 to 202, a reduction of only 6 applicants.

Veolia reported annual training costs at $129,000. An additional $193,920 in operator trainee wages was based on 24,240 hours multiplied by a wage rate of $8.00. No additional direct expenses were reported.

Together, these two costs total $322,920 for the year. The cost per applicant trained works out to $1,599. The training cost per operator hired is $2,936.

Total Costs

Over the course of last year, Veolia in Baltimore spent $2,500 on recruiting, $105,000 on processing applications and interviewing, $33,384 on screening, and $322,920 on initial training for a grand total of $463,804 per year. With 110 operator "graduates" hired from this process, this total figure equates to $4,216 per operator hired. As indicate above, this does not include any costs associated with operator trainer wages, training materials, or management/administrative time to arrange and review screening results.

Summary of Findings

Tables 7-2 and 7-3 provide a summary of the information collected and costs estimated for each system studied. Table 7-2 shows the number of applicants recruited, interviewed, screened, trained, and ultimately hired (placed in service). Table 7-3 shows the estimated costs of recruiting, interviewing, screening, and training, as well as the total cost for each system. Table 7-2 also shows the unit costs per applicant and per operator hired.

Observations

The low number of applicants that CATS needs to recruit to fill the 12 job openings it had in the study year is strikingly small. It appears that, because CATS has a comparatively high wage scale—$14.41 per hour plus comprehensive benefits, CATS does not have to invest in recruitment/advertising, compared to the two contractors who spend between $2,500 and $7,042 per year in recruitment costs.

When the number of eventual hires is compared to the number of applicants recruited, there is a narrow range among the three systems: between 5% and 7%. This becomes a useful number for budgeting. If managers of ADA paratransit systems know the historic attrition rate, they can estimate how many applicants they will need to attract by dividing the number of operators needed by between 0.05 and 0.07.

There is a relatively narrow range of screening costs per operator hired, ranging from $222 per operator hired in Denver to $396 per operator hired in Charlotte.

There is a relative narrow range of initial training costs per operator hired, ranging from $2,583 in Charlotte to $2,936 per operator hired in Baltimore. Interestingly, if one looks at training costs per trainee, a comparison between the two contractors in Baltimore and Denver shows that these unit costs are almost equivalent—$1,541 in Denver versus $1,599 in Baltimore.

The biggest difference appears to be in interviewing costs per operator hired, ranging from a low of $147 per operator hired in Denver to a high of $955 per operator hired in Baltimore. Note that Veolia's total cost of reviewing the 1,800 applications and interviewing the 415 operator candidates in Baltimore at $105,000 is significantly higher than the $16,250 spent by MV in reviewing roughly 1,500 applications and interviewing 308 operators.

Table 7-2. Numbers of applicants recruited, interviewed, screened, trained, and hired.

	Applicants Recruited	Applicants Interviewed	Applicants Screened	Applicants Trained	Operators Hired
CATS/Charlotte	250	25	20	12	12
MV/Denver	1,496	308	224	197	111
Veolia/Baltimore	1,800	415	208	202	110

Table 7-3. Total and unit costs of recruiting, interviewing, screening and training applicants.

	Recruiting	Interviewing	Screening	Training	Total
CATA/Charlotte					
Total Costs	$0	$5,400	$4,747	$30,990	$41,137
Per applicant	$0	$216	$237	$2,583	NA
Per Operator Hired	$0	$450	$396	$2,583	$3,428
MV/Denver					
Total Costs	$7,042	$16,250	$24,573	$304,171	$352,036
Per applicant	$4.71	$53	$110	$1,541	NA
Per Operator Hired	$64	$147	$222	$2,749	$3,181
Veolia/Baltimore					
Total Costs	$2,500	$105,000	$33,384	$322,920	$463,804
Per applicant	$1.39	$253	$161	$1,599	NA
Per Operator Hired	$23	$955	$303	$2,936	$4,216

Overall, the total cost per operator hired is a fairly narrow range. The total cost per operator hired by MV in Denver ($3,181) and by CATS in Charlotte ($3,428) are nearly identical, while the total cost per operator hired by Veolia in Baltimore ($4,216) is not that much higher, again with the major difference being the substantially higher application review/interviewing costs. Paratransit managers can utilize this narrow range for more accurate budgeting as well as to make appropriate workforce decisions and balance the trade-off between investing in the workforce versus spending on recruitment and training.

The Other Costs of Turnover

While this portion of the research focused narrowly on the direct financial costs of turnover, it is important to recognize that a high turnover rate has many other significant impacts—some of which also have a monetary cost. High turnover can result in workforce shortages, which in turn can lead to closed runs and lowered service quality. The operational problems created by high turnover and workforce shortages can also have an impact on other operations personnel who must address and resolve these problems. This can lead to turnover in other job categories such as dispatchers and reservation agents.

High turnover can also be taxing on system managers. A significant amount of time can be diverted to recruitment and hiring, which may detract from time needed to properly manage the systems and supervise all employees. A very insightful comment made during the focus group discussions by an operator from a "challenged" system was that the management was "so used to managing turnover, they have forgotten how to manage people." The operating problems caused by turnover and workforce instability can also take a toll on managers. High turnover of managers is often evident in ADA paratransit systems that are "challenged."

In general, if not managed properly, vehicle operator turnover impacts the entire operation and organization. It can create a poor and difficult workplace environment for all employees and poor service quality for riders.

CHAPTER 8

Examples of Reported Practices and Tools

Chapter 4 introduced the "Performance Pyramid" as a way of illustrating the key factors shown through this multi-faceted research to have an impact on the performance of paratransit vehicle operators. The base "building blocks" of the "Performance Pyramid" are the following:

- Finding the right employees for the job,
- Providing effective training and tools for new operators, and
- Fostering a supportive work environment.

This chapter presents insights from survey respondents and focus group participants as well as tools and best practices employed by paratransit providers to build the foundation of the Performance Pyramid. The examples and best practices described in this chapter were identified through the national survey as well as through subsequent contact with selected ADA paratransit service providers.

Attracting and Selecting "The Right" Employees

To attract the applicants who are best suited to the ADA paratransit vehicle operator position, the first tasks for managers is to (1) identify the type of applicant they hope to attract by thinking about the traits and behaviors of a successful candidate and (2) create a job description that will help candidates understand the competencies and skills required to accomplish essential tasks and meet the needs of the organization. Effective techniques for recruiting and screening candidates and competitive wage and benefit packages can also help to attract a pool of potential paratransit vehicle operators with the greatest chance of success on the job. Guidance on all of these topics has been extracted from the project's literature review, paratransit provider survey, focus groups, and interviews with selected providers and is presented throughout this chapter.

Characteristics of Successful ADA Paratransit Operators

Information from the new employee training manual of a national private provider of paratransit services; data from focus groups conducted with paratransit operators, supervisors and managers; and the recruitment and training materials used by two other national companies were analyzed to identify common characteristics of a successful paratransit vehicle operator.

A minimum of nine characteristics were identified from these combined data sources. The following four characteristics were cited by all five sources:

- Meets safety, legal, and contractual requirements;
- Is responsible;
- Is safe; and
- Has a customer service attitude that extends to persons with disabilities and seniors.

Other characteristics that were identified by three or more sources include personal attributes like:

- Resourceful,
- Shows empathy,
- Communicates well,
- Reliable,
- Flexible, and
- Cooperative.

The full results of the analysis are provided in Table 8-1. As indicated, it is important to attract and recruit not just "drivers" but individuals who can become successful ADA complementary paratransit vehicle operators. It was interesting to note that only one source cited motivated or follows directions as characteristic of a successful operator.

Table 8-1. Characteristics of the successful ADA paratransit operator.

Characteristic	Operator Focus Group	Sup/Mgr Focus Groups	National Company A	National Company B	National Company C	Total Responses
Meets safety, legal, and contractual requirements	●	●	●	●	●	5
Responsible	●	●	●	●	●	5
Resourceful			●	●	●	3
Shows empathy	●		●	●	●	4
Works well with others		●		●	●	3
Attentive			●	●		2
Conscientious	●	●	●	●		4
Motivated				●		1
Safe	●	●	●	●	●	5
Communicates well	●			●	●	3
Reliable		●	●	●	●	4
Navigates well				●	●	2
Follows directions				●		1
Flexible	●	●		●	●	4
Cooperative	●	●		●	●	4
Customer service attitude, including with people with disabilities and seniors	●	●	●	●	●	5
Desire to help others	●	●				2
Total # of Characteristics	**10**	**10**	**9**	**16**	**12**	

Driving Skills are Easier to Acquire Than the Right Attitude

These results are consistent with Burkett's recommendation in **60 Ways to Improve Driver Recruitment and Retention** (22)—"hire attitude and train skills." This perspective was echoed during an interview with an access to the arts advocate for people with disabilities in Louisville, Kentucky. This individual, a long-time user of paratransit services, stated: "It's all about attitude. Not just attitudes towards people with disabilities, but attitudes about their jobs. They have to believe that their job is important and humanize their customers. Companies should hire people with the right attitude and teach them how to drive the vehicles and operate the accessible equipment."

The national survey revealed that most ADA paratransit service providers require pre-qualifications for vehicle operators. All 69 public agencies and private contractors that provided information require a good driving record, criminal background checks, and pre-employment drug and alcohol tests. All but one have a minimum age requirement, while sixty (87 percent) require proficiency in English. CDL licenses are required of all vehicle operators at 29 (42 percent) of the 69 systems. Another 16 systems (23 percent) reported an assortment of other pre-qualification requirements.

Comments from focus group participants revealed that vehicle operators may come from diverse backgrounds, but one common factor in their decision to apply for and remain on the job is a sense of accomplishment working with the public and assisting riders with disabilities. The general manager for one Denver RTD paratransit contractor stated: "If the person has been a caregiver, the company can teach him or her to drive versus someone who loves to drive but does not have empathy for the paratransit passenger." This perspective was echoed by other paratransit contractors. A long-

term nonprofit provider related that the right people for a paratransit operator position bring customer service skills with them and that the ideal applicant has previous experience interacting with diverse customers, including people with disabilities. Often the applicant has prior work experience in jobs that promote the importance of customers to the company's growth and well being.

Several survey respondents cautioned that individuals who have experience as taxi operators or over-the-road truck operators may have good driving and map reading skills but may lack the customer relations skills that are necessary for paratransit service, a fact to keep in mind during the pre-employment screening process.

Developing a Job Description

Key Job Description Components

- Essential functions,
- Working conditions and physical demands, and
- Qualifications for a successful operator.

Job descriptions that identify the essential functions of the job, as well as the working conditions and physical demands of the job, help to create a realistic picture for the applicant. The job description should also define the job so as to attract the most appropriate applicants for the paratransit vehicle operator position.

Paratransit operator job descriptions and job announcements provided by survey respondents, particularly the sections that communicate to potential applicants the attributes or characteristics of a successful operator's day, were reviewed. The content in these documents was compared to findings from the review of literature that focused on transit and related industries.

TCRP Report 127: Employee Compensation Guidelines for Transit Providers in Rural and Small Urban Areas suggests the following as the minimum job requirements for a paratransit vehicle operator (*43*):

Education:

- High School diploma or equivalent.

Experience:

- Previous professional driving experience preferred but not required;
- Previous customer service experience and experience working with persons with disabilities and/or senior citizen groups preferred, but not required; and
- Safe driving record and clean criminal history.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Ability to read, write, and speak English clearly;
- Ability to navigate the service area through the use of maps and/or onboard directional equipment;
- Ability to communicate effectively with passengers, passenger representatives, and system staff;
- Ability to remain calm in emergency situations and ensure the safety of all passengers and employees; and
- Knowledge of service area.

The job descriptions provided by survey respondents and selected agencies included the minimum responsibilities described above and other duties necessary to fulfill the paratransit vehicle operator position. Job descriptions requested from and provided by three national paratransit contract operators also included the functional aspects of the job and the desired behaviors of persons in the paratransit vehicle operator position. Each job description included a general summary of the paratransit vehicle operator position, explaining both typical working conditions and the physical demands of the job.

Effective Recruiting Approaches

Paratransit providers reported that they use a variety of methods to get maximum return on investment of their recruitment resources and get the "right" mix of potential applicants. Approaches that were identified in the research and considered effective by the systems contacted include those described in the following paragraphs.

Best Practice: Targeted Advertising

One general manager gives the following scenario that gives a rationale for a more strategic approach to recruitment advertising:

> Upon arriving at his new assignment, he found that the division had been using the same advertisement in the same publication for 3 to 4 years. He decided to change publications and make changes to the ad. He made it more colorful; changed the text and size of the ads, rotating between full page, half page, quarter page ads; and put the face of a smiling operator in the ad. In the general manager's words, this approach "prevents complacency" with the publication readers.

The following are examples of targeted advertising approaches designed to bring in applicants with the greatest likelihood of success of becoming a paratransit vehicle operator.

Specific Language to Targeted Applicant Pools

Seattle Personal Transit (SPT) in Seattle, WA, is operated by the nonprofit agency, Solid Ground. Figure 8-1 provides an

Are You A People Person?

Solid Ground is seeking Paratransit Drivers to provide door to door transportation for elderly and disabled persons. Req: ability to pass background check, have a clean driving record for the past 5 years and be familiar with the Seattle area. PT and FT positions paying $13.25/hr plus benefits. CALL (206) 694-6840 for application, apply at 1501 N 45th, Seattle or www.solid-ground.org. AA/EOE.

Figure 8-1. Sample advertisement for ADA paratransit vehicle operators used by Seattle Personal Transit.

example of an advertisement it runs to recruit applicants. The advertisement emphasizes that the agency is seeking applicants who enjoy working with people and particularly older adults and persons with disabilities. Key requirements of the job, including a good driving record, a clean background history, and a familiarity with the service area are listed.

Use of Weekly Community Newspapers

One of the ways that paratransit providers target specific audiences is to use newspapers that tend to attract certain audiences. In Denver, CO, one provider finds a free weekly newspaper, *Westword,* to be its best source for getting a large number of readers who are looking for jobs in the paratransit vehicle operator pay range to see the ad. *Westword*'s description on its website touts its reputation as an alternative newspaper:

> Since its purchase by New Times in 1983, *Westword* has grown into one of the largest alternative weeklies in the country—even though Denver is a major battlefield in a daily newspaper war. Every week, the new edition is eagerly snatched up in college classrooms, coffeehouses, corporate offices and at the State Capitol by faithful readers who appreciate hard-hitting, award-winning journalism.

Placing advertisements in *Westword* is very cost-effective and appears to appeal to those looking for work, especially individuals who are not likely to purchase a daily newspaper. This contractor's ads specifically state its preference for retiree applicants. Management states it probably gets twice as many applicants as its competitors.

A second contractor in the Denver area advertises in a weekly newspaper published by the Archdiocese of Denver to target job-hunters looking for work in the paratransit vehicle operator pay range. The newspaper, *Denver Catholic Register,* is free to the public, has cost-effective advertising rates and is distributed widely throughout Denver, often by homeless individuals. One of this contractor's advertisements, provided as Figure 8-2, targets *community/people-oriented* individuals while emphasizing its friendly, family-oriented working environment, and communicating the requirement of pre-employment and random drug screens.

Figure 8-2. Sample job advertisement used by special transit, Denver, CO.

Marketing to Specific Geographic Areas

MV Transportation in Orlando, FL, is able to get statistics from *Employment Guide,* a publication it uses to advertise positions, which show the parts of the city from which it gets the most operator applicant inquiries. This newspaper prints a toll-free number in the company's ad rather than its direct number; however, the number is linked directly to the company. With that information, company staff is able to obtain geographical information that gives the location from which each call originated. Management finds this to be a good tool for targeting ads to areas where the company wants to get an increased number of applicants. Subsequently, targeted and specialized advertising is distributed to those areas, rather than the previous broad-brush advertising.

Marketing to Targeted Demographics

One nonprofit paratransit service company made a shift in philosophy about how to recruit the best vehicle operator candidates approximately 1 year ago. The firm decided to not recruit employees who had worked for another paratransit company, as these operators often bring the prior employer's methods of operation with them, which can lead to conflict. Rather than using the state employment office, community employment agencies, and other local recruitment sources, the company sends job announcements to local churches, which it finds are filled with downsized or retired workers who are looking for a new career. The contractor also found that many of these workers come from corporations and non-transportation positions where good customer service is "part of the job." It has been the company's experience that

applicants from this group tend to possess the most important characteristic already: the ability to work with a diverse customer base, including people with disabilities.

In carrying out this new recruitment philosophy, the company sends a letter to various churches announcing job openings and included are descriptions and responsibilities of the job with special emphasis placed on working with elderly individuals and people with disabilities. This approach resulted in the employment of eight operators within a short period; all eight have remained with the company for the past year. While teaching these employees driving skills resulted in longer on-the-road training, the company has found it is worth the investment.

Other providers also reported success with recruiting individuals who are retired and who are seeking a supplemental income. Older, retired employees have been reported by several providers to be reliable and more oriented toward customer service. They also may be more amenable to working part-time shifts and fewer hours per week. If the individual is receiving benefits from his/her prior job, the benefits package offered by the paratransit provider may not be a critical concern. This is a particularly effective strategy in communities with significant retirement populations. Job fairs targeted to older job seekers were reported in the national survey to be one successful way to recruit older workers. One Denver RTD contractor states in its advertisements that it is looking for applicants who are retired (all advertisements are placed in a free alternative weekly newspaper).

Recruiting Tips

- Consider seeking applicants from among retirees and other older individuals and/or individuals with experience in the health care or other social service industries.
- Utilize churches or other religious organizations, job fairs for older workers, and ads in alternative newspapers to make contact with these target groups of potential applicants.
- Hire based on attitude and teach driving skills.

One factor to consider in recruiting older workers is that they may be more sensitive to work shifts that do not match their lifestyles. While they may appreciate part-time shifts (e.g., 4–5 hours per day), they may not be seeking or willing to accept evening or weekend shifts. If the managers become more effective in recruiting older workers, they may find it beneficial to create part-time work for these operators rather than to rely too heavily on split shifts.

Some paratransit providers also reported success with targeted recruitment of employees from the home health care and other social service industries. These employees may be more likely to bring a customer service attitude and skills in working with persons with disabilities to the paratransit vehicle operator position. One national company includes the following statement in its comprehensive recruitment strategy: Active and aggressive targeting of applicants who have been employed at hospitals and other agencies [serving] of older adults.

Best Practice: eRecruiting and Online Applications

Recruiting and screening of paratransit vehicle operator applicants is a time-intensive process, especially with the high turnover rate that is common in many paratransit environments. Recruiters are often required to "fast-track" the review of applications to reduce the impact of vacant positions on service delivery as quickly as possible, which can lead to a superficial analysis of applicants' background, resulting in inadequate vetting of their fit with the requirements of the job.

In order to facilitate the recruitment process, organizations are using electronic human resources (eHR) systems. *The Brave New World of eHR: Human Resource Management in the Digital Age* (*44*) describes the most common practices as:

> (a) adding recruitment pages to existing organizational websites; (b) using specialized recruitment websites (for example, job portals, online job boards); (c) developing interactive tools for processing applications (for example, online applications, email auto responding); and (d) using online screening techniques (for example, keyword systems, online interviews or personality assessments). The advantages of eRecruiting include the ability to manage responses, track applicants, identify candidates, maintain hiring records in a single organized place, and assist with compliance reporting requirements.

One private paratransit provider described the advantages of using its online application process:

> [A] paperless application process achieves three things: lowers cost of advertisements; encourages a larger pool of applicants; and applicants can complete the application online, at home, or by coming to company locations.

Research completed for *TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium* (*27*), found eRecruiting to be a best practice for making it easy for potential applicants to conduct job searches on the Internet to apply for online jobs at the Washington Area Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). WMATA tracks the number of resumes received, number of interviews conducted, and number of hires with each recruitment. Each application has a number code that alerts staff as to which medium was used to acquire the application.

Several transit systems reported using Internet resources to attract paratransit operator applicants. For instance, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Inc., in Lynn, MA, uses Craigslist, a centralized network of online communities, featuring inexpensive online classified advertising in a number of categories, including a section for jobs.

Employee Referral Bonuses

Employee referral bonuses can be an effective way to recruit qualified vehicle operator candidates. Referral bonuses build on "word-of-mouth" recruiting, which was identified in the focus group discussions as a major, and perhaps underappreciated, source of job candidates.

Existing Operators Can Be the Best Employment Ads

Current employees who are satisfied with their jobs are natural recruiters for paratransit operator positions. Employee referral bonus programs encourage referrals of potential applicants by existing employees.

Various versions of formal employee referral programs were reported by private paratransit companies and transit agencies. The following are a number of employee referral programs discovered during this study:

- $300 is paid to current employees if both the referring employee and the new hire are still employed by the organization after 6 months.
- Referring employees are eligible for an unlimited number of $250 referral bonuses if they refer an applicant who remains employed as an operator for more than 90 days.
- Referring employees are awarded $150 if the new employee successfully completes six months of employment and an additional $250 after the new employee's first year of employment.
- Referring employees receive a $150 bonus after the new employee has been on board 90 days and $150 after 6 months of employment. The referred employee—the new hire—also receives the bonuses.
- A bonus of $150 is paid to the referring employee after the new operator completes 6 months on the job.
- The referring employee receives $100 if the new hire remains for more than 4 months and another $100 if both the referring employee and the new operator are employed with the organization for more than 12 months.
- Referring employees receive $125 when the new hire completes training and another $125 when the new operator completes 90 days on the job. There is no limit on the number of referral bonuses that an employee can receive.
- Referring employees are paid a bonus of $50 once the new hire completes 6 months of employment.
- Employees earn a $25 bonus if a referred applicant is hired and successfully completes 3 months of service. In this agency, over a 12-month period (May 2008–May 2009), 42 percent of new hires were referred by current or past employees.

Research completed for *TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium* found employee referral programs to encourage internal recruitment to be a best practice within the transit industry. The study report included five examples of referral programs designed and implemented by transit agencies. While the amounts of payment differ from agency to agency, the concepts of how to make the program meaningful are the same. For instance, in each case the programs are designed in multi-phased bonus formats with the referring employee receiving two or more payments as the new hire reaches specific employment milestones.

Hiring Bonuses

One national survey respondent, Global Transportation in Denver, CO, reported that it began offering a $250 hiring bonus to increase the number of qualified vehicle operator candidates. The company noted that this hiring bonus offset a relatively low $7.00 per hour training wage (2008) and improved the training completion rate as well as recruitment efforts. The hiring bonus effectively increased the training wage by about $3.00 per hour.

Best Practice: Comprehensive Recruitment Strategies

Described in the following paragraphs are the comprehensive recruitment strategies being used by a nonprofit paratransit provider and a national provider of contract paratransit services, which incorporate many of the best practices mentioned in the previous sections.

A Nonprofit Agency. As mentioned previously, Seattle Personal Transit (SPT) is a transportation program of the nonprofit organization Solid Ground, an agency that provides a number of human services to individuals in King County, Washington. SPT uses a variety of methods to recruit employees. Some recruitment approaches, such as newspaper ads, are fairly traditional; others, such as web-based advertising, are nontraditional. The organization employs approximately 140 paratransit operators and in 2008 maintained an employee

turnover rate of 24%, down from 28% the previous year. Employee referrals are a major component of the agency's recruitment strategy. SPT employees receive notices of all job announcements. Employees earn a $25 bonus if a referred applicant is hired and successfully completes 3 months of service. In the 12 months ending in May 2009, 42% of the new hires had been referred by current or past SPT employees.

Thirty-six percent of new hires stated they learned about job opportunities through the agency's website, job fairs, and other media sources. Eleven percent of new hires were referred by WorkSource, an agency that provides an array of employment and training services designed to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of employer and job-seeker services in the Seattle area. Eleven percent of new hires were referred by a neighboring transportation company.

In an effort to ensure the greatest coverage of information about SPT job openings, the agency advertises on 13 websites and newspapers in the area. Websites include Solid Ground's website, NativeChat.net, Craigslist, and Careerbuilder.com. The agency has also established free links with many other websites in the area.

Job openings are regularly posted at seven technical and community colleges as well as at three universities in the area. Through email distribution, job opportunity notices are sent to more than 100 local nonprofit agencies. In addition, job opportunity bulk mailings are sent to more than 375 establishments that include nonprofit agencies, community centers, libraries, churches, schools, employment resource centers, and Seattle Housing Authority facility sites. The agency has also conducted recruitment fairs with paratransit agencies that are reducing their workforces.

One unique recruitment strategy used by SPT is to credit employment hours from a former employer if a new employee has paratransit bus operator experience. Starting wages at SPT are based on hours worked as a paratransit operator. The employee can request and provide payroll records of hours worked from the previous employer and submit that information to SPT. New operators with previous experience must still complete the same 6-month probationary period as all other new employees do.

A National Paratransit Contractor. One national provider of paratransit services supplied details about actions it takes to attract the best candidates for ADA paratransit vehicle operator positions. The company states that the use of these approaches may vary across operating locations depending on the unique characteristics of the labor pool or resource availability within each area. In addition to targeting health care workers and retirees, the company includes the following as recruitment methods:

- Employee referral bonus plan.
- Sign-on bonuses.
- Increased training wages.
- Paperless application process.
- The corporate Qualification Department reviews all applications and conducts criminal background and reference checks. This department employs highly trained individuals who support the contract locations by ensuring that all applicants meet company standards before they are interviewed and possibly given a conditional job offer.
- Placement of 1-800 numbers on the back of company vehicles that will provide information about hiring opportunities.
- All dispatchers are trained in communicating with potential applicants.

Comprehensive Pre-Employment Screening

Pre-employment screening is needed to ensure that applicants meet regulatory and contract requirements that often apply to the provision of ADA paratransit service. Pre-employment screening is also an important part of identifying candidates who are most likely to be successful operators. Effective screening can also help lower training drop-out rates and reduce training costs.

Comprehensive pre-employment screening can include reference checks and verification of employment, credit checks, and education and credential checks. Research conducted during this study revealed that systems also often require criminal record checks, motor vehicle records/driver abstracts, a DOT-physical, drug and alcohol testing, and sometimes a CDL license with endorsements. The literature search noted one example of a private company that requires candidates to sign a screening release to gain access to credit records and information regarding DOT/FTA drug and alcohol testing violations, including pre-employment tests. The literature also noted two private companies that present standardized criteria for determining a candidate's approval of all of the required background checks and offer *conditional employment* if the process becomes time consuming (*43*).

In addition, two private companies reported conducting a *pre-qualifications* interview prior to the application process which includes a pre-screening of driving experience, driving and criminal history, licensure, and age requirements. Initial applicant screenings are conducted through a telephone interview. Both companies also include a review of the job description with the candidate in its initial applicant screening process.

One provider of ADA paratransit service for the Denver RTD uses the review of the motor vehicle record (MVR) as the first pre-employment screening action. Previous job experience, types of jobs, and spelling and grammar on the application are all noted. Because the computer for submitting applications is in the front office, the recruiter assesses how long it takes the applicant to go through the online application

process. This consideration is relevant because RTD is moving toward onboard computers on all of its vehicles. The recruiter also makes a pre-interview telephone call to assess basic communication skills. With all of these items completed, a decision is made as to whether to set up an in-person interview. Drug and alcohol screens, a DOT physical, and background checks follow successful interviews. Upon completion of this screening process, most applicants get cleared for training.

Another Denver RTD contractor begins its pre-employment screening process with a review of the application to make sure it is complete. Next, there is a review of the MVR record not only to evaluate how many points the individual has but also to check the number of incidents recorded. In some cases, a person with a high number of incidents yet an acceptable number of points may have plea bargained with authorities. Any applicant who has had a suspension within the past five years is not eligible for further consideration. The job applicant's experience is also reviewed: this may include paid or volunteer experience, such as working with older adults at a nonprofit agency or church. This contractor also conducts a pre-interview criminal background check. The interview process includes job-related questions and an assessment of how well the applicant reads and writes in English. Applicants must also pass a map-reading quiz. After this process is completed, the applicant is sent for an interview with the supervisor of operators.

Best Practice: Pre-Screening for Map Reading Skills

Map reading skills were reported as a disqualifier in study focus groups as well as in interviews with paratransit management teams. In describing what is often found in pre-employment screening, one contractor gave the following scenario:

> People may have been born and raised here and they know how to get around town, but do so by saying 'Go over here by the Conoco station and make a left,' never having looked at a map book, and so it is a real challenge. A lot of time the ones that don't make it through training it is because they do not get through the mapping.

Rather than waiting until employees are in new hire training, some providers assess basic map reading skills during the pre-employment screening. The following is a tool that one contractor, Special Transit in Denver, Colorado, uses to test basic map reading skills found to be essential to success in performing the paratransit vehicle operator job. The map shown in Exhibit 8-1 is provided to applicants, and they are asked to complete the single map reading exercise that accompanies it.

Realistic Job Previews

According to a recent study of labor issues at a major ADA paratransit operation, "an honest appraisal of all of the aspects

Exhibit 8-1. Example test for basic map reading skills.

Sample Map Reading Exercise

As a driver you will be required to have basic mapping skills. Our Training Department will teach more advanced mapping during the three-week of new driver training.

You have 15 minutes to complete this timed exercise.

1. Note the compass on the top of the attached map page; please complete the south, east and west directions on the compass.
2. Please locate Niwot Estates on your map. Mark as your starting point. Starting on Monarch Rd. using a marking pen show how you would get a Niwot Rd. and Elm St.
3. Please describe each turn (right or left) and which direction you would be heading (north, south, east, west) as you would travel from Monarch Rd.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

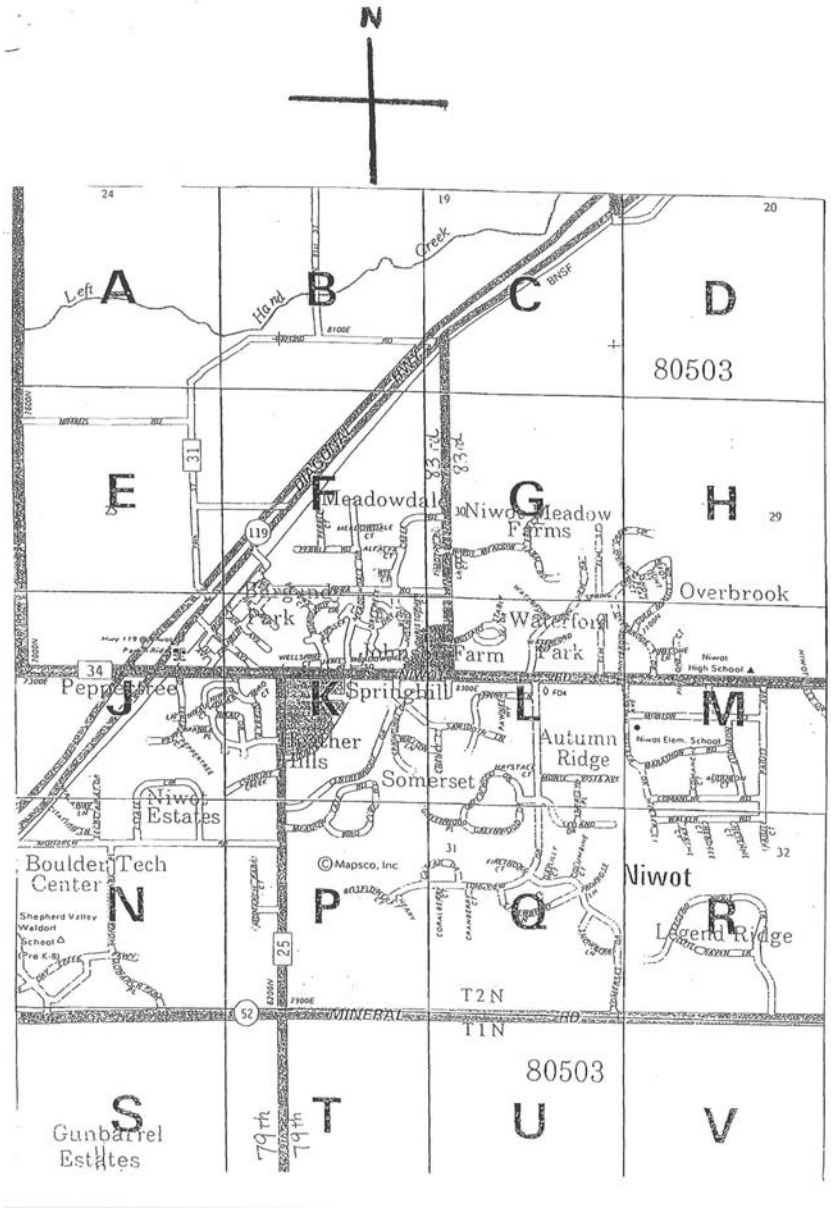
4. Identify three major streets or roads on this map.

A. _____ *B*_____ *C* _____

5. Looking at your map, in which direction is Mineral Rd. heading: north and south or east and west?

Applicant Name: _____ *Date* _____

Exhibit 8-1. (Continued).



of the job should also be provided during the interview process. Applicants may feel they are applying for a "driving" job when, in fact, there is a lot more involved than just driving. An honest job preview can reduce the training drop-out rate as well as early post-training turnover" (*45*).

The literature review also revealed the importance of a realistic job preview as a factor in attracting applicants and retaining new hires. One innovative approach identified during the research is to have applicants spend a day on the road with an experienced operator to give operators a better sense of the actual job. Another approach being used is to have the new hire spend the first day going through an obstacle course set up in an enclosed parking lot and driving the vehicle that will be used on the job.

Job Preview

Previewing the paratransit vehicle operator job with applicants can help to identify individuals who would not be effective or comfortable in the job **before** they are hired and begin training or passenger service.

A third innovative approach is designed to allow applicants to (1) self-select out of the process if they feel the job is not a good fit or (2) become more interested and committed to the

job if it is a good fit. This process also provides the applicants with a realistic picture of both positive and negative aspects of the job. The process consists of the following three steps:

1. The applicant views a video of what the paratransit operator position is like. The video allows the candidates to compare the activities and responsibilities of the job with their own interests and preferences and to decide if they wish to proceed with the application.
2. The applicant sits in a vehicle seat so he/she understands the feel and size of the vehicle and to determine whether he/she can safely reach the pedals; and
3. The applicant completes a self-assessment to help him or her decide if this job is right for them.

Compensation

An obvious major factor in attracting and retaining good employees is the level of compensation offered. Wage rates for operators in the paratransit industry are typically rather low. The national survey indicated that, in 2008, the average starting wage paid by private contractors was $10.47 per hour. Public agencies that directly operated service indicated slightly higher wages, averaging $12.06. The survey also showed that for both public and private providers, ADA paratransit vehicle operators are paid less than their fixed-route counterparts.

Research summarized in Chapter 5 suggests that wages are a significant factor in turnover. The research conducted indicates that turnover can be decreased by 3.5% to 5.1% for every $1.00 increase in the starting wage.

Following are some examples of efforts to improve vehicle operator compensation and examples of comprehensive compensation packages reported by systems with stable workforces.

Best Practice: California Labor Code 1070-1074

"Fair wage" or "livable wage" requirements are becoming more common. One example, specific to public transit services, is in the State of California, where legislation was passed in 2003 to attempt to address this issue. The legislation, now part of the state's labor code (California Labor Code, Section 1070-1074, 2003), includes the following language:

> . . . it serves an important social purpose to establish incentives for contractors who bid public transit services contracts to retain qualified employees of the prior contractor to perform the same or similar work.

The legislation requires that public entities bidding public transit services must give preference to bidders who agree to retain qualified employees of prior contractors. Specifically, the legislation calls for public entities to give a 10% preference to these bidders in the bid evaluation process.

Best Practice: Charlotte Area Transit System, Charlotte, NC

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) operates its ADA paratransit service (STS) in-house. Vehicle operators receive a comprehensive compensation package that includes a $12.87 starting wage (2008), 10 paid vacation days and 12 sick days per year, as well as 9 paid holidays per year. For every 13 weeks that an operator does not call out sick, they receive an additional half day of vacation. Operators contribute $14.76 per week for individual health care coverage (2008), and $96.17 per week for family health care coverage. A 3% 401K program match is also provided.

CATS indicated a total vehicle operator workforce of 82 and indicated that only 12 new hires were needed in a recent year, which suggests only a 14.6% annual turnover rate. CATS reported that it has little difficulty attracting qualified operator candidates. Managers noted that no trainees have dropped out of training in recent years and that only two operators have been terminated in the 90-day probationary period in the past 16 years.

Best Practice: LINK Transit, Wenatchee, WA

The Chelan-Douglas Public Transit Benefit Area (LINK Transit) in Wenatchee, WA, has an integrated vehicle operator workforce with operators hired and trained to perform either fixed-route or ADA paratransit service. LINK reported that vehicle operators receive a $14.17 starting wage, with a maximum wage of $19.98 (2008). In 2008 the agency also reported that it provided 100% individual as well as family health care coverage, 10 paid vacation days to start, 12 paid holidays, and a contribution toward a retirement plan.

LINK reported only a 14.8% annual post-training turnover rate and an 88% training completion rate. The agency also noted that while vehicle operator compensation is very good compared to other systems, the gains it has seen in productivity, reportedly attributed to a large degree to the experienced, stable workforce have more than offset the increased labor costs with gains in system productivity. LINK is featured as a case study in Chapter 10 and more information on the costs and benefits of its compensation program is discussed there.

Best Practice: Enhanced Benefits Packages

A common theme heard in comments from focus group participants conducted during this study was that inadequate employee benefits can contribute to a lack of success in recruiting and retaining paratransit vehicle operators. The national survey also indicated that fringe benefits provided by some ADA paratransit service providers, particularly private contractors, can be minimal.

During the course of the research, two private contractors were also identified who indicated that reasonably complete fringe packages were provided to ADA paratransit vehicle operators. Table 8-2 summarizes benefits packages offered by these two paratransit contractors.

Both companies reported that they have good success with recruiting vehicle operators and also experience low rates of operator turnover. The attractiveness of the fringe benefits offered was noted as a reason for this success.

Best Practice: Performance Bonuses

Another way that companies and agencies improve compensation is with bonuses based on performance. This approach not only increases compensation for operators but reinforces positive behavior that benefits the provider. The following are several examples of performance bonus programs utilized by paratransit contractors in the Denver area.

- MV Transportation provides vehicle operators with a $150 bonus every 2 months if they meet three criteria: (1) do not have any preventable accidents; (2) have no preventable injuries on vehicles they have operated; and (3) have perfect attendance (i.e., have no unscheduled call-outs).
- Global Transportation provides an annual safety bonus, which can be up to $150, if an operator has no preventable accidents. Global also provides an attendance bonus. Operators are eligible to receive $150 if they have fewer than three unscheduled call-outs in a 6-month period, or $100 if they have fewer than five unscheduled call-outs in a 6-month period.
- Coach USA offers $120 to operators each month who have no "events"—preventable accidents, tardiness, or unscheduled call-outs.

Other practices identified in the research that reward operators for performance include the following:

- Paying an extra $1 or $1.50 per hour for each pay period in which an operator has perfect attendance (i.e., no tardiness or unexcused absences).
- Cash bonuses for extended periods of time (such as a quarter, 6-months, or year) without a preventable accident or customer complaint.
- Other forms of recognition and prizes for good performance, such as "Operator of the Month" recognition, gift certificates, or other rewards.

A unique approach to performance bonuses was also reported by Veolia Transportation in Baltimore, MD. This company created a bonus program that recognized performance of groups of operators which created a friendly competition within the company. The following paragraphs describes the program, dubbed "Veonopoly."

Paratransit operators and supervisors are divided into ten teams; teams typically include 20–25 individuals each. Each team is given $7,500 in Veonopoly "scrip" at the beginning of each quarter. Deductions and additions are made from the scrip based on various performance measures: absenteeism, tardiness, accidents, and rider complaints and compliments. At the end of the quarter, the team that has earned the most money is paid that amount in cash by the company, to be divided equally among team members.

Veolia reported that the implementation of this program, together with more targeted recruitment and more thorough checks of prior employment, helped them lower annual post-training turnover rates from 75% in the first half of 2007 to between 28% and 52% at various times in 2008 and 2009.

Table 8-2. Fringe benefits provided by Seattle Personal Transit and Special Transit.

Paratransit Provider	Benefits
Seattle Personal Transit (Seattle, WA)	Employees who work 20 hours or more per week (after 6 months of employment) on a regular basis: • Holiday pay of 80 hours/year. • Paid leave based on years of service with ability to bank leave up to 180 hours. Excess hours paid out in cash. • Health, Dental, Short- and Long-term Disability Benefits. • Employee Assistance Program. • 3% contribution of gross wages to pension fund (even if employee chooses not to contribute).
Special Transit (Denver, CO)	• Medical, Dental, Basic and Supplemental Life Insurance. • Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance. • Short and Long-term Disability Insurance. • Flexible Spending Account. • 403b Plan. • Employee Assistance Program (for anyone in employee's household). • Vacation, sick, holiday pay, and floating holidays.

Tools and Training for Paratransit Operators

As detailed by the Performance Pyramid, the next step toward satisfied employees and reduced turnover rates is the provision of training and other tools to aid operators in achieving their highest levels of performance. Following are examples and best practices identified in the literature, survey, and through follow-up contacts made during the study.

New Employee Orientation

Research completed for *TCRP Report 77: Managing Transit's Workforce in the New Millennium* (*27*), found that feeling welcome is one of the most important and lasting impressions for a new employee joining a workforce. In the national survey, various versions of new employee orientation programs were reported by transit agencies around the nation. Results of data collected in focus groups and through interviews with various paratransit managers also showed that new employee orientation is often a part of the new hire training. Case studies revealed variations of new employee orientation programs.

The City of Baltimore's Department of Transportation's new employee orientation program familiarizes the employee with the culture and goals of the organization. Beginning with the first week of training, employees are introduced to a working environment that respects their input, rewards involvement, and insists that each employee share responsibility for customer service.

According to the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) in Louisville, KY, a successful new operator orientation is a team effort, which requires a top-down commitment for success. TARC's new employee orientation program is an organizational effort and is supported by the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and all departments. The program begins with introductions to and presentations by the Executive Director, Union President, and Director of Transportation. The trainer also introduces the employee to department heads and other employees while touring the facilities. Employees receive an orientation package of information that includes TARC's mission statement, vision statement, fiscal year goals and objectives, and training guidelines.

Job-Specific Training for New Operators

The new paratransit vehicle operator must be able to demonstrate proficiency in each of the job description requirements, including road skills testing and proper manifest reading and mapping prior to being certified as capable of doing the job.

The national survey found that, on average, about 127 hours of training are typically provided. This includes about 59 hours of classroom instruction and 68 hours of on-the-road training. One respondent commented that training is the final screening and helps the trainees "demonstrate their ability to comprehend training material, verbalize and write their response to specific questions and problems, and verify the trainee's proficiency in the English language."

Training materials were requested from the three largest national private paratransit contractors. A review of the programs showed that each included the following:

- Legally required information, such as drug and alcohol testing program information, regulatory and safety requirements.
- Organizational orientation, including a review of human resources policy and procedures (e.g., sexual harassment).
- Skills-related information, such as customer service and emergency and safety procedures.
- Operations orientation, including scheduling, dispatch, accounting or fare collections, and record keeping.
- Vehicle familiarization including a variety of vehicles, lifts, and securement devices.
- Defensive driving and vehicle operation under a variety of road conditions, terrain, and locations (e.g., expressways).
- ADA requirements and instruction on how to assist persons with a variety of disabilities.

The programs also indicated that trainers utilize a "show, not tell" approach to model the instruction. This approach includes the following:

- Training is presented in a hands-on, realistic manner; for example, simulations are used to model the correct way to provide assistance to customers with a variety of disabilities.
- Training lasts for 6 to 8 weeks followed by a probationary period.
- Trainees are assessed for proficiency throughout the training by means of homework assignments, quizzes, observations, and written tests.

Training in Advanced Technologies

A number of respondents to the survey noted that they have installed Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation systems on vehicles and have found that it helps new operators in particular. Even with better training and more time spent on map reading and learning the area, it is difficult for new operators to have a good working knowledge of the entire service area (particularly in very large systems). Technology that can assist with finding specific addresses can relieve much of the stress on new operators. It can even help experienced operators to find infrequently used or uncommon addresses.

Mobile Data Computers (MDCs) can make the communications between vehicle operators and dispatchers more efficient and can reduce wait times for dispatch assistance. MDCs can also minimize the handwriting that is associated with paper manifests or with add-ons to the schedule. As noted above, though, if advanced technologies are employed, these systems need to function properly and vehicle operators need to be trained to proficiency in their use. Poorly performing equipment or a lack of understanding of these advanced technologies have been reported to have negative impacts on vehicle operator performance and job satisfaction.

Reinforcing Safety as a Value

Throughout the research for this study, the importance of operators understanding that safety is a core value in everything a vehicle operator does was emphasized. Safety is one of the cornerstones of "how we do business" in the industry. Even though formal training related to safety techniques and actions is limited, paratransit providers have instituted practices to reinforce that safety has to be foremost in the thinking and actions of vehicle operators. Provided below are examples of how providers create and reinforce "safety first" teachable moments.

- **Example 1:** Monthly safety meetings are a staple in ADA paratransit environments. In these meetings, safety messages are presented by managers and employees with exemplary safety records are recognized. Related issues, such as the safe and proper securement of various types of mobility aids are sometimes covered.
- **Example 2:** Safety/attendance awards are often combined to emphasize the importance of safety and good attendance. Perks that come with these awards range from bonuses up to $150, to special parking spots for a month, to having the operator's picture and story posted on company bulletin boards and in the company newsletter. Typically, all operators with spotless (or near spotless) records within a designated period have their names put in a bowl and the winner of the award is drawn from this group of candidates.
- **Example 3:** The CEO of one private company begins each regularly scheduled conference call with local managers with a message about safety. These managers in turn relay the same message to operators.

Use of DriveCam Technology to Support Safe Driving

The use of video cameras on transit vehicles to monitor driving behavior and to document any unexpected incidents while in service is becoming more common. Some national paratransit providers make this a standard feature on services they provide. Companies report that the technology can not only improve safety but is a very helpful tool for investigating complaints and incidents. It is also reported that the cost of the technology can be significantly offset by savings in insurance premiums. Any time there is a sudden vehicle movement, such as going over a curb or a deep bump in the road very quickly, the camera is activated and captures video and audio for a short period of time after the event. While the information is primarily used for accident investigations, operators can also activate the camera if there are other in-service incidents.

One company reported that to emphasize the importance of safe operations, anyone who goes a month without a *DriveCam* incident gets to put his or her name in hat for a drawing. With the reward program attached, the onboard camera is typically viewed in a positive light.

Recertification

Veteran paratransit vehicle operators need to maintain skill levels developed during the new operator training. Some providers include regularly scheduled continuing education and recertification in essential skills areas.

The following document is an example of continuing education and training for vehicle operators at Special Transit in Denver. Special Transit staff explained its use:

> Our Road Supervisors use this form to evaluate operators after they have completed training. The Road Supervisors ride along with the operators and if they observe any problem areas, coach the operators on ways to improve. Our goal is to evaluate operators a minimum of once a year, but it can be more often depending on the outcome of the evaluation.

Special Transit road supervisors also check operators quarterly to make sure they are following proper wheelchair securement procedures. Exhibit 8-2 is an example of the form used to document these evaluations.

Providing a Supportive Work Environment

A common theme during focus groups conducted with managers from paratransit systems that have stable workforces was that the overall work environment was viewed in a positive light by employees. Vehicle operators from these systems reported that the organization was like a "family" and that they enjoyed the people with whom they worked. They indicated that the organization had a real concern for its employees and looked out for their interests.

Small efforts, such as recognizing birthdays and periodically hosting breakfasts or company gatherings, were cited as things that helped improve the camaraderie and the overall work environment. Other factors—support, recognition, and hear-

Exhibit 8-2. Example of an operator assessment form.

Access-a-Ride PERSONAL TRAINING DRIVER RIDE-A-LONG ASSESSMENT
NAME: _____ DATE: _____ DIVISION_____EXAMINER _____
IN POSSESSION OF: LICENSE _____ DOT CARD _____ WATCH _____ UNIFORM _____ MAP BOOK _____ OTHER _____
TIME: _____SERVICE AREA _____AM_____PM_____ UNIT # _____
E - ***EXCELLENT*** **G -** ***GOOD*** **N.I. -** ***NEEDS IMPROVEMENT*** **U-** ***UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE // Y-yes N-no***

observed pre/post trip		predictable stop- door timing	
reviewed form only		checks that clients are seated	
		rechecks passengers before moving	
smooth acceleration steady speed		lift operation	
smooth stopping / complete stops		wc. maneuvers done properly	
square right turns left turns		Secure wc.with Qstraints, seatbelt offered	
right lane change left lane change		Hazards/ park brake used	
signal use		canes/walkers/packages out of the way	
mirror use			
intersection awareness		drivers attitude	
defensive driving skills		helpful answering questions	
steering control		on time / schedule	
slows down over rough road		telephone protocol	
right lane use		paperwork, complete / legible	
railroad crossings- full stop hazard lights look/listen		distraction management- phone paperwork conversation	
backing : in R horn 4ways get out & look mirror checking		coach comfort- temperature music conversation	
monitors dashboard		**COMMENTS :**	
stopping distance			
side clearance			
pulling to curb / parallel			
driver wears seatbelt			
traffic control signs			
traffic etiquette			
separating hazards			
following distance			
Maintains lane			
Yields right of way when appropriate			

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Name: _____ has received personal training/job coaching while on duty, and will receive _____credits for the Special Transit continuing education program.

PERSONAL TRAINER: _____
DATE: _____

I have received an assessment and/or coaching as noted above, that will help improve my ability to perform my job as a driver.

DRIVER : _____

DATE : _____

cc: Operations Manager ___ Div. Supervisor ___ Safety ___

Exhibit 8-2. (Continued).

SPECIAL TRANSIT
PARATRANSIT - Wheelchair Securement Certification

Employee _____ **Date** _____ **Field Trainer** _____

N/A = item was not applicable. N/A should be placed in Yes or No column	Yes	No
Wheelchair using customers		
Did the driver check hand grips and brakes on w/c for safety?		
Was there a clear path of travel for the w/c to or from the vehicle?		
Did the driver follow proper procedure while maneuvering up or down a step? (one step at a time, forward up, backward down, etc)		
Did the driver push/pull the chair as opposed to lifting the chair while going up/down a step?		
Was proper procedure followed while going up or down a ramp?		
Proper lift procedures		
Were operator and bystanders clear of all moving parts?		
Was lift door properly secured before operating lift?		
Was w/c loaded facing out?		
Were w/c brakes set?		
Did the driver turn OFF the power on an electric chair while on the lift?		
Did the driver secure the lift safety belt prior to operating the lift?		
Did the driver have a hand on the w/c while it raised/lowered and the whole time the lift was off the ground?		
Was s/he standing in the proper position to restrain chair while raising or lowering the lift?		
Did the driver check the lip of the lift, to be sure it was locked into place after rising from the ground?		
Did the driver push the w/c ¾ of the way into the vehicle before entering the vehicle to finish loading? Or leave the w/c ¾ of the way in the vehicle before leaving the vehicle to unload?		
Did the driver stand in front of the ELECTRIC w/c while it reversed into the vehicle? (Or while it came out onto the lift?) Same procedure for manual chair when customer operates their own chair on to or off of bus.		
Tie Down procedures		
Was the chair positioned facing forwards, wheels straight, squarely between the floor tiedown spaces?		
Were chair brakes set?		
Was electric chair power turned off?		
Were front straps placed on first?		
Were front straps placed into floor brackets (directly in front of the frame of each side of the chair and checked for secure fit BEFORE being put on chair?		
Were front straps hooked to a solid part of the frame?		
Were front straps connected where they would not shift or slip off?		
Were the front straps at a vertical 45° angle and not twisted?		
Were front straps pulled tightly and extra strapping Velcroed up off the floor?		
Were rear straps placed into floor brackets directly behind the frame on each side of the chair, and checked for secure fit BEFORE being put on chair?		
Were rear straps secured to a solid part of the frame?		
Were rear straps connected where they would not shift or slip off?		
Were rear straps at a 45° vertical angle and not twisted?		
Were rear straps pulled tightly towards floor bracket, ratcheted and secured?		
Was entire chair checked for secure tiedown hold?		
Passenger restraints (Seatbelts and shoulder straps)		
Requirements for the Q-Straint System		
Were passenger restraints secured to rear tie down straps?		
Were the seatbelt straps passed between the wheel and frame and then through the armrest?		
Was the female side of the seatbelt on the isle side of the chair?		
Was the seatbelt fastened securely?		
Was the shoulder strap placed across the chest and connected properly to the female side of the seatbelt?		
Were wheelchair and passenger secure and ready for transportation?		

(continued on next page)

Exhibit 8-2. (Continued).

Requirements for the Kenodyne System		
Were passenger restraints secured to the floor just inside of the rear tie down straps?		
Were the seatbelt straps passed between the wheel and frame and then through the armrest?		
Was the female side of the seatbelt on the isle side of the chair?		
Was the seatbelt fastened securely to the isle side of the passenger at the hip?		
Was the shoulder strap secured into the bracket in the wall securely?		
Was it placed far enough back to allow the shoulder strap to come across the shoulder of the passenger?		
Was the shoulder strap placed across the chest and connected properly to the female side of the seatbelt?		
Were wheelchair and passenger secure and ready for transportation?		

Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ing and acting on concerns—also play a part in the cultivation of a positive work environment. Some efforts can have an immediate impact, but more often, changing the work environment is something that requires time and requires ongoing effort to maintain.

Employee Communication

Keeping employees informed of matters that affect them and their work is a tool that is easy to implement, yet often underutilized. The company newsletter is one way to create an environment in which employees feel in-the-know and connected. One example of an effective aspect of a communication strategy is a newsletter published by Special Transit in Denver, CO, an organization with an annual operator turnover rate of less than 30 percent. The newsletter, published monthly on bright green paper, includes news that relates directly to employees personally and to the organization overall. (See Exhibit 8-3 for a sample employee newsletter.)

Best Practice: Early and Ongoing Input and Involvement

One private contractor, SCR Transportation of Chicago, IL, begins inviting vehicle operator feedback as soon as training is completed. The company requests employee feedback in an

Exhibit 8-3. Sample employee newsletter.

Employee Newsletter

One issue of Special Transit's newsletter includes a front-page article written by the Executive Director about the outcomes of the retreat held weeks before by the Board of Directors of Special Transit. The article speaks about the strategic goals set during the retreat, including action steps, responsibilities, and timelines for achieving those goals. Within the newsletter is an HR Corner, written by the Human Resources Manager, that includes recognition of employee birthdays, employment anniversary congratulations, names of new employees and those leaving the organization, and finally an inspirational message titled " A Lobster Tale: Shed Your Shell and Grow." The Safety page gives an update on Safety Bingo, an incentive designed to heighten awareness of safety practices in the organization, and provides other safety information related to driving laws in Colorado. Congratulations are given to an employee who recently received the "Go the Extra Mile Award," with a notation: "These awards are a way to show appreciation to our employees who go above and beyond the call of duty to move our mission forward." Other newsletter content relates to the design phase of the organization's building expansion project and a one-page profile of one of Special Transit's board members.

effort to ensure a positive experience for new operators from day one. Feedback is obtained using a one-page survey given to employees upon completion of new operator training.

The survey is titled *New Hire Evaluation.* The header states its purpose:

> WELCOME TO SCR! Please take a few moments to fill out this survey and let us know about your experience as you join our SCR family. We take your input very seriously and want to address your concerns from the minute you walk through our doors.

Operators are asked to respond anonymously to the following questions by selecting either agree, not sure, disagree, or no opinion:

1. I was pleased with the service I received when applying for the position
2. The front desk was responsive when it came to the inquires about my application status
3. The interviewer was pleasant and informative.
4. The impression that I have of the company after the interview is the same impression I had of the company after training.
5. The trainer was knowledgeable of the material shown in class.
6. The material used in class (written, verbal, video and audio) were all helpful and informative.
7. The road training was useful and made me feel more confident about the job.
8. My road trainer was knowledgeable and I felt confident with his training.
9. I feel ready to tackle the job after completing the full training course.

At the bottom of the survey, new operators were given sufficient space and an opportunity to write comments about each of the following:

- The training's strengths were.
- I believe the following can improve the training.
- General Comments.

Ongoing vehicle operator feedback is invited at regular company meetings. SCR also has a suggestion box that is used for feedback between meetings. The company takes the additional step of reporting on comments received, as well as progress made in addressing issues raised as part of its employee newsletter.

Best Practice: Mentoring

One paratransit provider shared information about its mentoring program for new operators, known as "cadetting" in that system. Another example of operator mentoring, described in *TCRP Report 77,* comes from fixed-route transit operations but is also applicable in a paratransit environment. Both programs are described in the following sections.

Cadetting

MV Transportation at SamTrans in San Carlos, California, reported use of post-classroom, behind-the-wheel peer support as part of its training program, including 40 hours of "cadetting." Cadetting assigns a trainee to an experienced operator who serves as an operator coach and models driving the vehicle before turning it over to the trainee.

Details of the program are as follows:

- The trainee is to arrive earlier than the operator so he/she can map out the manifest.
- The trainee completes the pre-trip inspection with the operator.
- The operator starts driving in the morning, and the trainee takes over after lunch.
- The trainee performs customer service duties, operates the radio, and assists riders who use wheelchairs.
- The trainee fills out the manifest cover sheet.
- The trainee completes the post-trip inspection with the operator.

Transferrable Fixed-Route Operator Mentoring Procedures

RTC RIDE in Reno, NV, has had a mentoring program for new fixed-route coach operators since 2000 (*TCRP Report 77* describes the program using its former name, Citifare Operating Mentoring Program). The program is an example of a structured approach to preparing veteran operators to guide, tutor, coach, and advise new operators during the beginning weeks of their employment. The goal of the program is to make the adjustment to the RIDE way of doing things as easy as possible. This cost-effective strategy has proven to improve the retention rate of new operators. The mentor program begins following the trainee's completion of a 7-week classroom and line-instruction course.

The following is how the program works:

- Mentors are selected from among veteran operators who have good records and show potential for teaching others what they know.
- Each mentor completes a 16-hour mentoring training seminar.
- The Operations Training Coordinator assigns each new operator a mentor, a veteran operator who conducts the revenue training with the new operator and afterwards

maintains contact related to personal and or work-related issues that affect work performance.
- At the Encounters-of-the-Meal-Kind, a meal paid for by RIDE, the operator and mentor sign a contract that outlines what their relationship will be in the future.
- The mentor and trainee follow through with the contractual agreement and meet regularly to discuss any issues or concerns the trainee may have.
- On average, each mentor assignment lasts between 60 to 90 days; however, the length of time may vary based on individual trainee needs.
- The mentor completes observations and evaluations and submits the documents to the Training Coordinator.
- The mentor also works as part of a team to solve specific operations-related problems and recommend changes where necessary.
- Mentors receive a seven percent pay increase during the assignment period.
- Mentors are recognized as special by the "RIDE Mentor" lapel pin they wear.
- Supervisors monitor the trainee's performance and enter any observations they find in a shared confidential log. At the end of the trainee's probationary period, he or she meets with the Training Coordinator, the trainee's supervisor, and the Director of Operations for a final interview, bringing to close the formal training program. At this meeting the trainee is retained or discharged based on their performance during the probationary period. If performance concerns exist and the decision is to retain the employee, additional training is scheduled with the assigned mentor.

The program is successful because of a number of factors: (1) mentors are veteran operators with exemplary records and are well prepared for the mentoring role; (2) mentors are recognized for their contributions with the special lapel pin; (3) a formal contracting and evaluation process is the foundation of the program; and (4) confidentiality that is maintained between the operator and mentor creates a bond of caring and concern between the two individuals.

CHAPTER 9

Benefits and Issues Related to Workforce Integration and Wage Parity

As noted in Chapter 3, a number of transit systems across the country have operated ADA complementary and fixed-route transit services with an integrated vehicle operator workforce. In some cases, they have also achieved wage parity for operators assigned to each mode. Other transit systems are considering workforce integration and wage parity as a way to address ADA paratransit vehicle operator workforce issues.

As part of this study, targeted research was conducted for several selected systems that have achieved or are moving toward workforce integration and wage parity. The research methodology is first presented. Next, the salient experiences of the systems are discussed by topic. The report concludes by presenting the experiences of four systems in detail as case studies. A table that lists basic information about the systems involved in the study is provided at the end of this chapter. The protocol and interview form used to collect information from systems is also included as Appendix D.

While the systems contacted had varying experiences, all spoke favorably of the decision to institute workforce integration and/or wage parity. For these systems, the benefits from the change outweighed the associated costs and challenges. In some cases, systems reported significant performance improvements and cost savings, belying the view held by some in the transit industry that the benefits of integration and wage parity come only at a financial cost. These experiences suggest that instituting workforce integration and wage parity, done correctly, is a "win-win" change for transit systems, operators, and riders with disabilities. Systems that have already made such a change are important resources for thinking about and instituting these changes in new contexts.

While workforce integration and wage parity are not necessarily linked, the majority of the systems interviewed had instituted both to some degree. Although many systems reported similar experiences and broad themes emerged, the research uncovered a great deal of diversity in terms of workforce structure and the reasons for instituting workforce integration and/or wage parity. No system reported conducting any formal analysis of the benefits of changing to wage equity or an integrated workforce. In fact, some respondents reported their systems began with these features, and others made the change decades ago and did not track the benefits over time. The study's key findings include the following:

- Systems consistently reported a number of general benefits that came with workforce integration and wage parity. Benefits reported include the ability to cut overtime and contractor costs, a more satisfied union, better run coverage, fewer rider complaints, a stable workforce with low rates of absenteeism, and increased disability sensitivity among operators.
- Although some services cited financial benefits as a major reason for the move to workforce integration and/or wage parity, they also frequently said the commitments of local politicians or board members, complaints about contractor-provided service, and union demands were reasons for the change.
- Systems often noted that operating costs increased when paratransit was brought in-house and wages were equalized. In the case of several services, however, respondents cited long-term cost savings due to improved productivity, in addition to expected benefits like efficiency, run coverage, workforce morale, and customer satisfaction.
- The fact that workforce integration and wage parity often occurred simultaneous with the shift from contracted service to in-house service makes it difficult to isolate the benefits that can be exclusively attributed to workforce integration/wage parity.
- Most systems saw union-related benefits that followed from workforce integration and/or wage parity, or at least the absence of significant union-related problems or issues.
- Systems reported that their initial training period is shared for all operators, with additional training for specialized runs. When bringing paratransit in-house, systems generally modified training curricula to address the unique nature of both paratransit and fixed-route runs.

- Among services that have an integrated workforce, there is a continuum of degrees of integration and a variety of possibilities of organizing such a workforce.
- Operator bidding preferences do not appear to complicate service provision or generate more than a minimal and expected level of frustration about desirable runs.

Methodology

The research began with the national survey results, which included data on 22 transit systems that had instituted, partially or completely, workforce integration and/or wage parity. Follow-up contact was successful with 20 of the 22 national survey respondents. Of these, it was learned that two did not in fact have integrated workforces and had not achieved wage parity. One additional system, which was identified by the research team after the survey was completed, was added to this sample. A total of 19 systems were therefore studied.

A list of questions was developed that examined each system's experiences with workforce integration and/or wage parity and verified information collected in the initial survey. The questions focused on topics including operator awareness of the needs of riders with disabilities, union issues, and the motivations behind instituting workforce integration and/or wage parity. A copy of the questions and interview protocol is provided as Appendix D.

In advance of each interview, participants were e-mailed a list of questions to be discussed in order to give them time to acquire the information as needed. Using the list of questions as a guide, semi-structured telephone interviews were then conducted, with follow-up calls and e-mails as needed. The data from the national survey plus the follow-up survey and interviews were then analyzed for themes and findings. Table 9-1 provides a profile and general information of all 19 systems studied.

The following sections present the main themes and findings identified by the research. The experiences of several systems that were particularly salient are then presented as case studies.

Reasons for Workforce Integration and Wage Parity

All of the systems with wage parity and an integrated workforce reported that the decision to equalize pay was made along with, or soon after, the decision to integrate the workforce. The systems with some form of integrated workforce fell into two broad categories, those that brought paratransit in-house following a period of time when it was contracted out, and those that started providing paratransit services in-house at the same time as fixed-route services. Roughly half of the services interviewed made the change in the last 10 years. Several other services equalized wages and integrated workforces prior to the ADA, including Citibus, Lubbock, TX (1976); Pierce Transit, Tacoma, WA (1981); and CamTran, Johnstown, PA (1986).

Respondents reported a number of standard reasons for instituting wage parity and an integrated workforce. These include a concern with the efficient use of resources on the part of local politicians or the transit agency itself; recognition of the comparable level of effort and skill required for operators in both modes; frequent complaints about service provided by a contractor; factors that made it easier for the service to simply operate paratransit in-house like the absence of qualified potential bidders or a relatively small service; union demands; and a management or board commitment to equal pay as a matter of fairness.

Specific systems that made changes toward workforce integration and wage parity cited the following reasons:

- Research Triangle Regional Public Transportation (Triangle Transit), Morrisville, NC, formerly provided only commuter service. But in expanding to an all-day service, the system was required to provide paratransit, which began in 2002. Because Triangle Transit was responsible for a relatively small service (6 paratransit operators), it seemed easier to operate in-house and train all operators together than to attempt to contract or train them separately.
- Lawton Area Transit Service (LATS), Lawton, OK, took over the paratransit service in 2002 from a local contractor. The contractor's performance was consistently unsatisfactory, oversight was problematic, and rider complaints were frequent. In taking paratransit in-house, LATS opted to pay paratransit operators $.50 more per hour because management believed that the job was more demanding than fixed route.
- Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority, Nashville, TN, equalized pay and integrated its workforce in 2003. In doing so, the system attempted to satisfy union demands for higher paratransit pay while creating a larger, more flexible pool of operators to improve run coverage.
- Muncie Indiana Transit System (MITS), Muncie, IN, began cross-training its operators on both paratransit and fixed-route services in the mid-to-late 1990s in order to save money by reducing the need for overtime with a more flexible extraboard. MITS had operated fixed route and paratransit in-house since 1982 when the system took over a senior citizens service.

Costs and Benefits of Workforce Integration and Wage Parity

In general, respondents noted that operating costs increased when paratransit was brought in-house and when wages were equalized. Systems typically did not alter benefit packages

Table 9-1. Systems that have achieved or are working toward workforce integration and wage parity.

	Workforce Size			Turnover	Hourly wages for paratransit vehicle operators			Hourly wages for fixed route vehicle operators			Costs		
Name	Paratransit Vehicle Operators	Fixed Route Operators	Notes:	Annual Turnover Rate	Training	Starting	Max	Training	Starting	Max	Paratransit Cost/Trip	Paratransit Cost/Hour	Notes
LATS	4			33%	$7.75	$10.25	$15.25	$7.75	$9.75	$14.75	$11.44	$27.55	
Triangle Transit	6		none	0%	$12.00	$12.00	$20.14	$12.00	$12.00	$20.14	$39.25	$68.84	
CamTran	6	10	These figures are based on operator trends, since they can bid on paratransit or other modes. CamTran also operates a Metro fixed route service with 44 operators.	0%	$8.50	$11.95	$15.93	$8.50	$11.95	$15.93		$56.49	Metro fixed route operators have a max pay of $18.31/hour
MITS	11	37		0%	$7.25	$11.84	$16.92	$7.25	$12.32	$17.60	$20.08	$61.92	
MARTA	125			10%	$11.23	$11.23	$14.62	$13.68	$13.68	$19.54			
Pierce Transit	53	553	A section of the paratransit service, not included here, is contracted out.	0%	$14.19	$15.77	$23.74	$14.19	$15.77	$23.74	$20.00	$40.04	
Link Transit	82		All drivers operate both, with daily pull-out of 14-15 paratransit vans	18.3%	$11.00	$14.50	$20.00	$11.00	$14.50	$20.00	$26.35	$78.77	
CDTA	51		Plus 22 taxi cabs*	10%	$10.00	$13.07	$18.67						
Citibus	21	34	Extra Board Operators are full time and work in all departments	5%	$9.50	$10.50	$15.00	$9.50	$10.50	$15.00	$23.26	$58.07	

(*continued on next page*)

Table 9-1. (Continued).

	Workforce Size			Turnover	Hourly wages for paratransit vehicle operators			Hourly wages for fixed route vehicle operators			Costs		
Name	Paratransit Vehicle Operators	Fixed Route Operators	Notes:	Annual Turnover Rate	Training	Starting	Max	Training	Starting	Max	Paratransit Cost/Trip	Paratransit Cost/Hour	Notes
Annapolis Transit		35	Route deviation service fulfills paratransit responsibilities; 30 operators have served on	40%	$11.00	$11.50	$17.00	$11.00	$11.50	$17.00			
Metro RTA	73	203	Incls. 12 Special Services Operator: part-time paratransit operators at fixed wage, $10.68	8.3%	$10.68	$12.92	$21.53	$10.68	$12.92	$21.53	$29.72 on buses, $15.78 on cabs		
San Joaquin RTD	78	105	There are 75 County operators and 104 Metro operators		$10.88	$13.93	$17.42	$10.88	$13.93	$23.22			Wages split by Metro and County Service, not paratransit and fixed route
MATA/MTM	69	260		28%	$9.00	$12.00	$14.63	$12.00	$14.63	$19.81	$18.00	$32.00	
PRN	65			21.54%	$7.15	$8.15	$11.15	$7.15	$8.15	$9.15			
Veolia Transportation (Irvine)	522			16.66%	$9.00	$10.75	$14.06	$9.00	$10.75	$14.06			
Veolia Transporation (DART)	320	45		48%	$10.00	$10.50	$14.41	$10.00	$10.50	$14.41	$41.33	$58.42	Respondent could not verify
Merced County Transit	24			20.83%	$8.00	$10.45	$14.25	$8.00	$10.45	$14.25			
Nashville Metro. Transit Authority			Total workforce 300, and 292 operators perform fixed route and paratransit	12.00%	$11.92	$11.92	$18.90	$11.92	$11.92	$18.90	$19.53	$44.31	
UTA	82	860	Wage parity will be instituted in July 2009			$14.10	$18.24		$14.10	$18.24			

when bringing paratransit in-house and integrating the workforce but rather extended those packages to paratransit operators.

Few services were able to provide data that accounts for the cost and performance impact of the change. Several notable exceptions, however, reported that the change to an integrated workforce and wage parity reduced cost per trip or improved performance, sometimes dramatically. Chelan-Douglas Public Transit Benefit Area (Link Transit), Wenatchee, WA, and City of Annapolis Department of Transportation (Annapolis Transit), Annapolis, MD, both reported performance improvements—with decreased cost per trip for the former and increased ridership for the latter. Both are discussed in case studies below. The respondent for Lawton Transit Management, Inc. (LATS), Lawton, OK, noted that cost per trip dropped from roughly $15 per hour to $11.44 per hour, an accomplishment that is notable because LATS opted to pay its paratransit operators $.50 more per hour than fixed-route operators. As the LATS respondent noted:

> We decided to pay paratransit a little more because it's a more hands-on, more stressful, more demanding position. Operators need to [stand up] for each pick-up. This extra payment has helped with morale.

Similarly, the respondent for MITS explained that cross-training its operators saved the system money by increasing the flexibility of the extra-board and reducing the need for overtime; this remained true even after the system equalized pay between fixed-route and paratransit operators.

In addition to these specific increases in ridership and/or productivity, system respondents consistently reported a number of general benefits that came with workforce integration and workforce parity. These include the following:

- Cutting overtime and/or contractor costs;
- A more satisfied union and/or workforce because of the elimination of wage disparities within the workforce;
- A more flexible pool of workers in terms of run coverage (for example, operators may cover both modes on the same day);
- The ability to pull operators from the pool of paratransit or fixed-route operators to cover runs on the other mode because operators are cross-trained;
- The ability to more easily cover emergency pickups; and
- Fewer rider complaints due to greater workforce oversight and/or a workforce that is trained on both fixed route and paratransit and thus more sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities.

Union Issues

The majority of the systems (16 out of 22 respondents to the national survey) had unionized paratransit workforces. In follow-up interviews, the majority of participants cited union-related benefits that followed from workforce integration and/or wage parity or at least the absence of significant problems. Several services reported initial opposition from fixed-route operators in the union who feared that instituting wage parity would negatively affect their pay (including Utah Transit Authority, discussed in a case study below). The range of experiences with unions includes the following:

- Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority reported the decision to equalize wages and integrate the workforce was made in collaboration with the union, a move which resulted in a "big improvement" in operator morale as well as run coverage.
- Link Transit noted problems in bringing paratransit in-house: three-quarters of the staff from the former paratransit provider joined the system but lost their seniority in run-selection because the contract defined seniority by Link application date. Even though such operators were making higher wages, they had lost a significant degree of authority. This created some staff resentment.
- A new union representative with MATA/MTM in Memphis, TN, pushed for a progressive wage scale and more equal paratransit and fixed-route wages. Despite some resistance from fixed-route operators who had previously been paratransit operators, management and the union struck a deal in July 2008. As of May 2009, paratransit pay was commensurate with the 2nd tier of fixed-route pay. In the process of negotiations with the union, paratransit operators' "transfer rights" to fixed route were eliminated. Prior to July 2008, all paratransit operators made the same pay and had the right to transfer to fixed route after 2 years, even in cases of poor performance. MATA/MTM management agreed that higher pay would attract more qualified paratransit operators who would stay longer especially after the transfer rights were eliminated. Management now reviews all paratransit operators who apply to work fixed route. Both the union and the MATA/MTM respondents report a much more content paratransit workforce.

Varieties of Integration

Among services that have an integrated workforce, there is a continuum of degrees of integration and a variety of possibilities of organizing such a workforce. All but two of the systems with wage parity and workforce integration—Triangle Transit, Morrisville, NC, and LATS, Lawton, OK—let operators bid for

runs by seniority. These two exceptions have relatively small paratransit workforces (4 and 6 operators) that are distinct from the fixed-route workforces. Generally, these operators work only one mode, and there is little regular cross-over. But in the case of both systems, managers are able to draw on the paratransit operators to cover fixed-route runs as needed.

The remaining services employ a diverse set of arrangements to structure their integrated workforces. Services including Metro RTD in Akron, OH, and CamTran in Johnstown, PA, maintain separate urban and rural services with a pay differential determined by bus size. Across this diversity, operator bidding preferences do not appear to complicate service provision or generate more than a minimal and expected level of frustration over desirable runs. A number of systems noted that operators often tend to prefer either paratransit or fixed-route runs and consistently bid for them. Some respondents noted that paratransit presented an attractive bidding option because of the convenience of a fixed schedule. In the case of Pierce Transit in Tacoma, WA, the paratransit service that complements fixed-route evening hours is provided by a contractor. As a result, the more convenient service hours of the in-house paratransit program, which also has wage parity, is so popular that operators must have at least 10 years seniority to have a chance of securing a paratransit run. In another example of how characteristics of the paratransit program may keep operators loyal to that program when wages are equalized, City Access (Lubbock, TX) operators prefer paratransit because it does not operate with split shifts the way fixed route does.

The following are several examples of the diverse possible arrangements for workforce integration (others are discussed as case studies):

- Among the roughly 300 operators in the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority workforce, 292 perform both paratransit and fixed-route service. Depending on the bid, operators may cover a fixed-route run or may cover a split-service package that includes both paratransit and fixed-route coverage. Nine operators cover only paratransit runs as a result of a "grandfather clause" agreement reached with the union.
- Metro Regional Transit Authority (Metro RTA) in Akron, OH, has 203 fixed-route and paratransit operators. Through four yearly sign-ups, operators may bid for base runs on the fixed route and paratransit modes; extraboard service; vacation coverage (where they fill in for operators on vacation); or split-service packages. In addition to the regular operators, the agency employs 12 Special Service Operators (SSOs). SSOs drive small buses and are not required to have a CDL. They cover only paratransit routes, work part-time, and make a fixed wage that is less than the wage of regular operators (starting wages of $10.68/hour versus $12.92/hour). SSOs have the option of moving into full-time employment but roughly half have no interest in doing so.
- A private for-profit contractor, Veolia Transportation in Dallas, TX, employs 320 paratransit operators and 45 fixed-route operators under a pilot program called Innovative Services which offers on-call drop-off service at fixed points within a zone. Operators are trained for 3 weeks to drive paratransit and may seek additional training of 2 weeks per zone to drive Innovative Services which uses paratransit vehicles.

Training

Systems with integrated workforces and wage parity begin with a shared training period for all operators. When bringing paratransit in-house, systems in the study sample generally modified training curricula to address the unique nature of both paratransit and fixed-route runs. Annapolis Transit reported the curriculum was expanded to include more awareness training about riders with disabilities, as well as information on ADA requirements and how to board riders who use wheelchairs. The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority extended its training period by one week to prepare operators for expanded service.

Several of these systems also require additional training for operators who wish to cover specialized runs. Veolia of Dallas, for example, trains all operators for 3 weeks to cover paratransit runs then requires an additional 2 weeks of training for each zone an operator might work on the fixed-route service (as stated previously). Conversely, Triangle Transit trains its operators together, with an additional 2 weeks for paratransit operators, who may be pulled to cover fixed-route runs as needed. Respondents frequently noted such shared training benefits the system as a whole. The respondent from Metro RTA summarizes this perspective: "Operators are trained about all aspects of service. That means folks who have come in from fixed route can be sent out to make emergency paratransit pickups. This works to Metro RTA's advantage."

Case Studies

The following more detailed case studies describe the experiences of four systems that instituted wage parity and/or workforce integration.

Instituting Full Workforce Integration and Wage Parity: Chelan-Douglas Public Transit Benefit Area (Link Transit), Wenatchee, WA

Link Transit began operations in 1991. During the first 4 years of operations, a local senior services non-profit pro-

vided ADA paratransit service. Because of complaints about the quality of the service, Link put the paratransit contract out for bid. Two contractors were interested, but reportedly were unable to compete for the contract because they could not secure appropriately-zoned land for an operations base and did not want to use a Link facility. After the lack of response from potential contractors, Link staff members approached the organization's board and recommended paratransit service be brought in-house, although without wage parity. Several board members, however, argued for wage parity for the benefit of the operators. When paratransit was brought in-house, roughly three-quarters of the senior services non-profit's staff joined, all of whom were operators rather than managers. In advance of taking over paratransit service in January 1996, Link purchased new software, radio systems, and vehicles. Matching state funds from a now-repealed tax supported this transition.

Link management decided to train paratransit operators using the fixed-route training program in order to instill a "guest service" (Disney model) attitude toward riders. Following the decision for wage parity and a shared training program, management then opted to integrate the workforce. As the respondent noted, "Once they'd trained them and paid them equally, they said, why not intermix the two workforces? It wasn't a conscious decision, but done in order to get the culture they wanted." Today Link has 60 full-time and roughly 20 part-time operators. Operators bid for runs based on seniority; some of these runs are mixed, but the majority is either fixed route or paratransit. Link reports operators tend to select runs based more on hours and days than whether the run is paratransit or fixed route.

The Link respondent noted the decision to integrate the workforces and institute wage parity presented some challenges. Today, there is some frustration with changing work assignments and split shifts, as well as some lasting resentment for the loss of seniority by operators who joined from the non-profit, because this affected their schedules. In addition, when Link opted to institute wage parity while bringing paratransit in-house, the system saw a large jump in hourly operating expenses. In 1995, the maximum wages of fixed-route operators was $12.95/hour, while it was $5.50/hour for paratransit operators. The current maximum wage is $20/hour, and Link reports the total cost per revenue hour is $78.77, up from $45 per hour in 1995. There was an initial cost increase of between 30 and 40 percent per hour when paratransit was brought in-house.

Over time, however, Link reports that benefits have outweighed the costs. With higher wages, turnover rates among paratransit operators dropped early on after the change. The long-term advantages—the workforce's efficiency, stability, and longevity—are reflected in the system's performance statistics. Despite a cost per hour that is high for the State of Washington, the cost per passenger is reportedly the lowest ($26.35). The average staff tenure is 13 years, and the respondent reports high job satisfaction. Paratransit service productivity is between 3.2 and 3.4 passengers per hour, despite a large service area of 3,500 square miles; the respondent related, "the stable work force means that operators don't get lost." The system reports an on-time performance of 94% and no more than one paratransit complaint per month in the past year. Absenteeism remains very low, with only 200 missed days for 80 operators last year. Among the roughly 300 daily trips, runs are rarely dropped because of a broad extraboard. In evaluating whether to contract paratransit service out again, Link has determined that the in-house efficiency is so high that it eliminates the cost of recruiting and training and generates a relatively low cost per passenger. Finally, the Link respondent reports that 25 percent of its paratransit passengers have moved to fixed route in the past 7 years. In large part, this is due to marketing and the fact that riders know fixed-route operators from their experience on paratransit, where they learn to attend to riders' unique needs.

Integration of an Alternative to Paratransit: The City of Annapolis Department of Transportation (Annapolis Transit), Annapolis, MD

Annapolis Transit provides a route deviation service, known as the Brown Route. People with disabilities and older adults pay $0.50 (half the fixed-route fare) if they catch the Brown Route at a bus stop, and $2 if they wish to travel on a demand-response curbside basis. Most people who are able choose the bus stop for financial and spontaneity reasons.

Wage parity and workforce integration were both instituted 18 years ago when the City brought in-house the program that had been operated by the Office on Aging. With three vehicles in the fleet, the Office's program employed three operators and a supervisor. With the change, the Office on Aging employees all came to work for the City's Transportation Department. Previously, the operators had been paid for the time that they were not driving (e.g., while waiting for riders who were attending programs). At the time of the change, operators' wages were increased, as were their work demands, since they were put in operation throughout the day and service hours were extended from 6 pm to 8 pm daily.

Initially, the shift was opposed by the head of the Office on Aging, but the Mayor was a driving force. He was concerned about the unproductive use of resources. Within one year after the Office on Aging program was brought under the auspices of Annapolis Transit, ridership increased from 16,000 to 26,000. Ridership continued to expand to the current level of over 200,000 annual trips. Such an increase was the result of two factors. First was the increase in service span despite

only a minor increase in operators from three to five and no increase in vehicles. Second was the substantial increase in productivity that resulted from serving Annapolis riders who needed rides throughout the day. Augmenting this increase in productivity, the city provides some support to a volunteer driver program to serve individuals who need door-to-door transportation. According to the Annapolis Transit respondent, general service quality did not change after the shift, except that the newer vehicles provided a more comfortable ride, and added service hours gave riders more options.

Today, the agency bids all routes on an annual basis. There is no extraboard. As a result, operators work overtime fairly often because there are 13 paid holidays. Following the switch to an integrated workforce, operator training was expanded to include more passenger sensitivity training. All operators are expected to be familiar with the ADA requirements and how to board riders who use wheelchairs. Annapolis Transit's total workforce is 35, including regular fixed route operators. At different times, 30 of these operators have chosen to operate the Brown Route. Five explicitly do not choose the route because they would rather not provide the extra service required to serve riders who use wheelchairs. Most experienced operators are happy to drive the Brown Route; the resistance comes from the newer operators. The system-wide cost per hour is $37.25 for direct operating costs, with 49,462 out of 218,438 annual trips made for people with disabilities. All full-time operators are represented by the same union. According to the Annapolis Transit respondent, the union is very pleased with the current arrangement because it has resulted in more full-time employment for operators.

Partially Integrating the Workforce and Equalizing Wages: San Joaquin Regional Transit (San Joaquin RTD), Stockton, CA

San Joaquin RTD took its ADA paratransit service in-house in 2002. Prior to that year, it had been operated by a contractor. During the time when the service was contracted, members of the disability community complained to the mayor and city council that buses frequently missed pickups, leaving people stranded. RTD administrators tried to work with the contractor to address these issues, but after several months with little improvement, RTD decided to cancel the contract. When the ADA service problems became apparent, RTD had just hired a new assistant general manager who was eager to improve the ADA service. She was soon promoted to general manager/CEO, and in her new position, she put in place improvements that ensured RTD would deliver highly reliable ADA service.

The county service was awarded to RTD in 1994 under enabling legislation that required that services be put out to bid at least once every 5 years. In 2000, during collective bargaining with the union that represented RTD operators, the union agreed to include ADA paratransit services in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that covered the county services. When RTD put the county and ADA services out for bid in 2004, there were no bidders and the services continued to be operated by RTD.

San Joaquin RTD oversees two service divisions—Stockton's fixed-route metro services including BRT and San Joaquin County services. There are 104 urban fixed-route operators and 68 county operators, a figure that includes about 20 paratransit operators at any given time, depending on run selection. ADA paratransit service in Stockton is grouped under the county services through the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In addition to the ADA complementary paratransit service for the Stockton metropolitan area, RTD's County operation includes county-wide general public Dial-a-Ride, deviated fixed-route service for unincorporated areas, an interregional commuter service, and intercity fixed-route service. All county services are operated at a different site and at three-quarters pay of the Stockton municipal services. The top hourly pay for the municipal services is $23.22, while the top rate for county services is $17.42. The county training wage is $10.88, and starting pay after completion of training is $13.93. This pay differential is summarized in a MOU with the union. The workforces of all county services are integrated and have wage parity. One-third of the paratransit operators are on Dial-a-Ride, while the other two-thirds assist in covering other runs as needed. All operators receive the same training, and the benefits packages of both fixed route and county are almost identical. When there is an operator opening in the metro service, county operators may bid by seniority on that opening, where they would have a higher pay rate. The system respondent noted that some county operators prefer to stay within the county services, however, in order to keep seniority, or because they enjoy Dial-a-Ride service.

As a result of an integrated county services workforce, the system can more easily and efficiently cover all runs, including periods when multiple operators take vacations. In an emergency, supervisors are also trained to make pickups. The system respondent notes that, in general, fixed-route and paratransit operators are more knowledgeable and productive because of their experiences with multiple modes. The respondent added that having a variety of operators serve on ADA paratransit runs has increased their sensitivity to people with disabilities.

The Dynamics of Recently Instituting Wage Parity: Utah Transit Authority (UTA), Salt Lake City, UT

UTA has been in a 30-month planning process to equalize fixed-route and paratransit operator wages and benefits.

This change, which will equalize the maximum wage rate to $18.24 per hour for both fixed-route and paratransit operators, was expected to be fully implemented in July 2009. At the time of the interview—the Spring of 2009—UTA's workforce of 806 fixed route and paratransit operators was not integrated. Job openings in all modes are posted, and agency staff members are given priority over applications from outside.

Management supported the decision to equalize wages, which came about as a result of a number of factors. Paratransit operators complained that they felt the wage differential reflected a lack of respect for the work that they perform. At the time that wage parity was being considered, paratransit ridership decreased due to implementation of a package of improvements that included in-person eligibility assessments, free fixed-route fares for paratransit registrants, travel training, and feeder service. These measures led to a slight improvement in paratransit efficiency, from 3.0 trips per hour in 2005 to 3.14 in 2007 to close to 3.3 in 2008. However, even this small increase in efficiency allowed UTA to reduce its paratransit workforce from 106 to 82 thus enabling the agency to assume the costs from increased wages.

The union was initially resistant because of concern that parity would result in a reduction in fixed-route operator wages. But a progressive union representative helped to persuade union membership that the change was a positive development. The union president at the time when this change was first proposed was very supportive of wage parity, arguing that all operators should be treated equally and fairly. While his views were initially unpopular among many of the fixed-route operators, this has gradually shifted over time. A union respondent said that at this point, only a minority of operators oppose the impending change. UTA's union respondent suggested that other agencies considering such a move should involve fixed-route operators early on in the discussion as a way of building support. When the decision was made to include wage parity in the forthcoming contract, "morale shot up" among paratransit operators, and two fixed route operators have already shifted to paratransit in anticipation of the move.

CHAPTER 10

Case Studies of Procurement and Contracting Best Practices

It has been estimated that between 70% and 90% of ADA paratransit programs use one or more contracted operators. Some systems also use contractors to perform reservations and scheduling and sometimes the dispatch function as well; depending on the contractual arrangements and relationships, these can be part of a turn-key operation contract or could be a contract for call center management or brokerage management services, with separate contracts for operations. Because the use of contractors for ADA paratransit is so predominant, the ways in which contractors are procured bears examination relative to their impact on the recruitment and retention of operators.

Some transit agencies include in their procurement documents (RFP, sample contract) terms and/or requirements that result in effective operator recruitment and a low turnover rate. For example, some transit agencies have developed procurement documents that specify a minimum vehicle operator wage rate or "livable wage rate" or even a "competitive wage rate." Moreover, some transit agencies have asked in their RFP for proposers to provide detailed information about wage rates *and* the fringe benefits that are available to operators. These agencies have discovered that it is not sufficient to question whether or not a proposer offers health care coverage to its employees, which only tells half the story; a follow-up and more illuminating question asks for the percentage of health care premiums that the employee must contribute. For example, if the percentage contribution is unrealistically high for an employee, health insurance effectively becomes unattainable.

Other transit agencies in their procurement documents have emphasized the importance of operator recruitment and the retention of a stable work force in a more circuitous manner by (1) including evaluation criteria and/or bonuses paid to the contractor for achieving a certain level of operator retention and/or (2) requiring or providing bonuses for 100% pull-out coverage.

By including such terms, these transit agencies are working to discourage the submission of proposals that include low operator wages, which are too often a casualty of the competitive bidding process. The goal is to generate competitive cost proposals that *also* accurately reflect competitive vehicle operator wage rates and fringe benefits and result in a more stable vehicle operator workforce.

The objective of this portion of the research was to collect best practice examples of procurement documents that directly or indirectly resulted in a fair vehicle operator compensation package and to determine how positively those strategies effected operator recruitment and retention.

Approach and Methodology

The first step in the research was to identify transit systems who indicated in the national survey that they crafted their procurement documents to contain one or more of the following provisions:

- Statements that a stable, experienced operator workforce was expected, along with evaluation criteria that put more weight on proposals that include effective vehicle operator recruitment and retention efforts or which otherwise evidence how this is to be achieved.
- Requirements to provide detailed information about specific operator recruitment and retention activities and the associated level of effort and cost specific to each effort.
- Requirements for a minimum operator wage rate or "living wage" or favorable or competitive operator wages rates, along with additional requirements to provide details of the operator wage rates, including training wage rates, starting wage rates, and maximum wage rates per vehicle type if appropriate for each year of the contract.
- Requirements to provide detailed cost information or assumptions about the levels of fringe benefits provided and the required employee percentage of contributions for health care insurance for each category of employee (single, married, family, etc.).

- Requirements to provide total and average operator wages and fringe, and the assumptions upon which that total cost is based, e.g., number of full-time and part-time operators, average shift lengths, total service hours by operator type and how that was calculated, and total operator pay hours by operator type and how that was calculated.
- Requirements to achieve certain standards for operator retainage (or turnover) and/or to maintain a sufficient operator work force or surrogate measure, such as achieving a certain standard for pull-out coverage; as part of this requirement, the specification of bonus payments for achieving these standards or penalties for not achieving these standards.

Among the respondents to the national survey, 26 public transit/paratransit agencies indicated that they included such language in their RFPs and contracts, and 14 of these 26 agencies indicated that they had had moderate or good success as a result. These 14 systems and the success indicated are shown in Table 10-1. The following summarizes those results:

- Eleven agencies reported moderate or good success with conveying that a stable and experienced work force was expected. Of these, ten stated that this was mentioned in the RFP, and seven stated that they included this as an evaluation criterion in rating the proposals.
- Seven agencies indicated moderate or good success with the inclusion of a living or minimum wage standard.
- Nine agencies indicated moderate or good success with incentives and penalties related to maintaining an adequate workforce and/or covering runs.

Follow-up contact was made with these 14 agencies to obtain more detailed information. Follow-up contact focused on the following:

- Determining whether any measurable improvements to service could be traced to the procurement/contractual provisions;
- Obtaining procurement/contract documents to get the exact language used (or point systems used in the case of evaluation criteria); and
- Discussing their perspectives and experiences with these strategies.

An attempt was made to also interview one contractor from each system to get a contractor perspective on the procurement process or contract provisions.

Thirteen of the 14 agencies responded, and detailed information was gathered from 12 of these systems. The research team was able to obtain a contractor perspective for 11 of the 12 systems contacted. Information from 11 of the systems contacted is included in the mini case studies below.

Lessons Learned

The data obtained in this study provided a strong and compelling case for the positive effect that certain ADA paratransit contractor procurement and contract provisions have on operator recruitment and retention of the paratransit contractors. The following are lessons learned:

- Transit agencies that included clear expectations of a stable, experienced operator workforce in their RFPs often did report lower rates of operator turnover. The language in the RFPs did appear to encourage potential bidders to improve compensation and focus more on efforts to maintain a stable operator workforce. In most cases, performance penalties did not have to be imposed because compliance with goals and contract provisions was achieved.
- Operator compensation stands out as the key determining factor of operator recruitment and retention. Even in areas without a municipal living wage ordinance, it was found that contractors who paid more per hour than lower-paying companies tended to see a reduction in turnover. Other efforts, implemented along with wage increases were also reported to achieve lower turnover.
- Contractors who were able to evidence in their proposals a successful track record of operator retention in their proposals claim to encounter minimal challenges in securing contracts and in implementing new contracts. At the same time, those agencies that did not include such expectation or requirement in their RFPs claim to value this experience when selecting a bidder.
- The comparative importance of cost versus service quality varied somewhat amongst transit agencies as an evaluation criterion, though it is important to note that the agencies valuing service quality over cost consistently reported high satisfaction with their operating contractor(s). For many procurements, the evaluation process is conducted in two independent phases: first a technical evaluation and then a price evaluation; and in at least one case, the two phases were undertaken by two different evaluation committees.
- Decreases in operator turnover rates and increases in service productivity were reported by agencies that selected contractors which evidenced competitive compensation packages and a commitment to maintaining a well-trained, experienced operator workforce. One agency was able to more than double its number of service hours provided as a result of the contractors' ability to maintain operators who were capable of meeting an increased level of service demand.

Whether expressed in evaluation criteria or contractual requirements, it is evident from the research that transit agencies that recognize the benefits of using contractors that can

Table 10-1. TCRP project F-13 survey respondents indicating moderate or good success with operator recruitment/retainage as a result of procurement/contractual provisions.

City	Transit Agency	"Stable, Experienced Workforce"		Living or Minimum Wage Standard in RFP	Incentives and/or Penalties for Maintaining Adequate Workforce or Covering Runs
		Mentioned in RFP	Evaluation Criteria		
Columbus, OH	COTA	Moderate	Moderate		Good
Dallas, TX	DART			Moderate	Good
Denver, CO	RTD access-a-Ride		Good	Good	Good
Everett, WA	Community Transit	Moderate			
Kalamazoo, MI	Kalamazoo Metro Transit	Good			Good
Los Angeles, CA	Access Services			Moderate	
Madison, WI	Madison Metro Transit			Moderate	Good
Nashville, TN	Nashville MTA	Moderate	Moderate		
Orange County, CA	OCTA	Good	Moderate	Good	Good
Lake Worth, FL	Palm Tran	Good	Good		Moderate
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix Public Transit	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	
San Diego, CA	San Diego MTS	Moderate		Moderate	Moderate
San Mateo County, CA	Redi-Wheels	Good			Good
Seattle/King County, WA	Access Transportation	Moderate	Moderate		

attract and maintain a stable, experienced operator workforce attract contractors who either share this recognition or who modify their practices to achieve this goal.

The following case studies summarize the approaches taken by 11 selected systems that were studied. Outcomes and experiences, as well as a contractor perspective on the changes, are provided.

Case Studies

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Dallas, TX

DART is the regional transit authority serving the Dallas metropolitan area, including the city of Dallas and 12 surrounding cities. DART has approximately 130 bus routes, 45 miles of light rail transit (DART Rail), 75 freeway miles of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, and an ADA paratransit service. DART and the Fort Worth Transportation Authority (the T) jointly operate 35 miles of commuter rail transit (the Trinity Railway Express or TRE), linking downtown Dallas and Fort Worth with stops in the mid-cities and DFW International Airport.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

DART's ADA paratransit service, called Paratransit, is organized as follows: DART staffs a call center that includes the reservations, scheduling and dispatch function for the entire system. DART also provides staff for contract administration, eligibility certification, and customer service functions. Veolia Transportation, under contract to DART, operates the service with a fleet of 186 vehicles supplied by DART. The contract payment structure includes a monthly fixed amount to cover fixed costs, a variable hourly rate for operations, plus reimbursement for tolls.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

In the survey, DART reported that it had moderate success with specifying a minimum wage rate in its procurement and contract documents and significant success with liquidated damages for uncovered runs. With respect to the minimum wage requirement, DART staff stated the following:

> We make it clear that we expect experienced, trained operators; by setting the bar high, we have a better chance securing such a workforce through the contract. As a rule, happy people make contented workers. A contented workforce makes good decisions and they are reliable. Requiring the contractor to provide a minimum or living wage helps to ensure a more contented workforce. Left to themselves, contractors will try to keep wages as low as possible. This low rate will eventually cause personnel to leave. The turnover rate increases and valuable experience and skills are diluted or lost.

In DART's solicitation, the two provisions related to the workforce were the following:

> Operators Minimum Wage Rates and Incentive Programs
>
> All persons employed as operators for performance of this contract or any subcontract hereunder shall be paid not less than $10.00 per hour while in training. The minimum wage standard imposed is a minimum and the Contractor is required to employ a systematic evaluation program and benefit package designed to encourage retention of well qualified and good performing operators for the duration of the contract. Toward this end, the Contractor shall establish progressive wage increases beyond the training level and offer such increases to employees who successfully graduate from the training program. Operators and mechanics shall also be provided a minimum of three (3) sick days as part of the benefit program. Failure to comply with this provision shall constitute noncompliance with the terms of this contract.
>
> Schedule of Liquidated Damages for Uncovered Runs
>
> Liquidated damages in the amount of $350 per occurrence shall be assessed for unavailability of operators or vehicles at Contractor scheduled operator report/clock-in time.

The Contractor Perspective

The Regional Manager for Veolia Transportation and former General Manager for this contract felt that the minimum wage rate/sick day provision has contributed more significantly to operator retainage than the uncovered run provision. He reported that competitive wage rates and benefits attract a "higher-quality" job applicant which results in less voluntary attrition, whereas the liquidated damages for uncovered runs are more to ensure that operators depart on time.

Reported Results

The Regional manager reported that *voluntary* operator attrition totals no more than five or less operators per year since the RFP/contractual provision for minimum wage and sick day benefits was instituted.

Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD), Denver, CO

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) is the regional transportation agency for the Denver metropolitan area. The RTD has 140 local, express, and regional bus routes and six light rail lines that provide 35 miles of light rail service. The RTD also has three demand-response services: (1) call-n-Ride, a general public dial-a-ride in several neighborhoods that cannot sustain fixed-route bus service; (2) access-a-Ride, its ADA paratransit services; and (3) access-a-Cab, a supplemental (non-ADA) taxi subsidy program that is available to access-a-Ride customers.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

RTD's ADA paratransit service is organized as follows: RTD contracts with First Transit to operate its paratransit call center. As part of this contract, First Transit provides reservations, scheduling, and dispatching services for access-a-Ride, and reservations for access-a-Cab. RTD has separate contracts with four different carriers to operate access-a-Ride services in Denver: Global Transportation, MV Transportation, Special Transit, and Coach USA. Special Transit is also contracted for service in Boulder, CO. The call center contractor develops the daily schedules and transmits daily run manifests to each of the contractors.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

In the survey, RTD reported that it had had significant success with (1) specific evaluation criteria for a stable experienced workforce; (2) requiring proposers to provide wage scales, and (3) specifying liquidated damages for uncovered runs. With respect to these strategies, the RTD access-a-Ride service manager attached the following note:

> Points are assigned via the evaluation process for a range of issues such as understanding and approach to the RFP, firm and staff experience and costs. While we do not mandate specific wages, we do identify current wage scales. Liquidated damages and incentives are designed to motivate contractors to perform within acceptable service standards.

The relevant provisions in RTD's paratransit RFP are:

- **Proposal Evaluation Criteria for Wage Rates.** Proposers who state that they will maintain (or increase) the current wage scales are given points accordingly. Proposers who state that their wage scales are below the current ones are marked down. The purpose of this is to maintain a consistency in the wage scale from one contract to the next. RTD views this evaluation criterion as a significant contributor to this goal, which in turn has contributed to low operator attrition rates.
- **Contract incentives and/or penalties related to maintaining an adequate vehicle operator workforce or covering all runs assigned.** As a contract provision, RTD assesses a $500 fine for each uncovered run, whether it is a result of not enough operators and/or not enough vehicles. On days when there are an unexpected and large number of operator call-outs, a carrier may not be able to cover all of the runs. In this circumstance, RTD allows a carrier to re-distribute trips from light runs to other runs where these trips might fit. However, in some cases, this may not be possible, and the carrier has no other choice but to give back the run. In this case, a $500 fine is assessed per "give-back." This provision is thus an inducement for a carrier to size an extra board correctly and for the carrier to have a back-up plan for calling in operators willing to work overtime.

The Contractor Perspective

The Executive Director of Special Transit had a slightly different take on the provisions in the RTD's procurement/contractual document, indicating that the provisions had perhaps less significant impact on vehicle operator recruitment in actual practice but also acknowledging that the liquidated damages for uncovered runs did provide an impetus for Special Transit's maintaining a sufficient roster of operators. She stated that the challenge for Special Transit is to balance the potential for liquidated damages against the cost of having excess operators, since the Call Center contractor (First Transit) can cut runs at any time. She added that RTD's practice of providing transit passes to contractor operators (at no cost to the operators) had a positive impact on Special Transit's ability to recruit and retain operators.

Reported Results

Special Transit reported an annualized operator turnover rate of about 35% for its access-a-Ride service in Denver. Interestingly, the Executive Director also reports a 0% turnover rate for its access-a-Ride operators in Boulder. She attributed this dramatic difference to the fact that the Denver operators are unionized, and the Boulder operators are not (Special Transit inherited a union shop when it took over the entire regional service in 2000 on an emergency basis for RTD). She further explained that the seniority-based shift-bid process (which is required by the union agreement) results in the newer operators getting the worst shifts (nights, weekends, etc.), and that the operator turnover in Denver is most acute among the newer operators. In contrast, Special Transit has more flexibility in matching individual operators' needs with shift requirements in the Boulder operation.

Attrition Rate. RTD reported that its contractors have experienced operator attrition rates ranging from 20% to 35%.

Run Coverage. RTD indicated that since the run coverage provision was instituted, the average number of "give-backs" have been reduced from 5 per week to perhaps 1 per month.

Community Transit, Everett, WA

Community Transit is a special-purpose municipal corporation providing public transportation services in Snohomish County, WA. Community Transit's services include fixed-route transit, vanpool, ride-matching, and paratransit (DART). In 2004, over 8 million passenger trips were made on the system, and Community Transit carried 57% of all Snohomish County-

Seattle commuters to work and back. The entire bus fleet is wheelchair accessible, either by low-floor ramped vehicles or buses equipped with wheelchair lifts.

Dial-a-Ride Transportation (DART) is Community Transit's ADA paratransit service. With an existing fleet of 53 vehicles, the service operates 7 days a week, covers 1,400 square miles, and provides an average of 800 one-way trips per weekday.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

DART service is operated by Senior Services of Snohomish County (SSSC), a private non-profit organization, through a contract with Community Transit since 1981. Although the contractor manages all day-to-day operations, the hardware and software, including an automated client file, reservation, mapping, scheduling, and dispatch system, is provided by Community Transit. Vehicles are also provided by Community Transit, but maintenance is provided by the contractor.

SSSC manages the day-to-day operations of the service. The organization's responsibilities include customer eligibility screening, customer service, scheduling, reservations, routing, dispatching, supervision, fare collection, and operations.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

Community Transit places a high value on service quality when selecting contractors, recognizing operator pay as an indicator of that quality. The agency's Contracted Services Coordinator stated the following:

> We make it clear in our RFPs that we expect experienced, trained operators; by setting the bar high, we have a better chance of securing such a workforce through the contract.

While the expectation of paying operators well and valuing employment longevity is not explicitly indicated in the RFPs, it acts as a strong determinant in selecting winning proposals. For example, Community Transit's most recent contractor was chosen largely because its proposal touted high wages for operators and extremely low turnover.

Community Transit's RFPs also include a detailed set of service standards, incentives, and liquidated damages, although Community Transit reported that the incentives do not have a significant impact on service. One of the liquidated damages provisions relates to run coverage. The following is an example:

> Contract incentives and/or penalties related to maintaining an adequate vehicle operator workforce or covering all runs assigned
>
> The Contractor shall provide adequate staffing to ensure that staff or manpower shortages are compensated for with qualified personnel in a manner which does not detract from staffing levels in other areas of this project.

The RFP includes the following language regarding penalties for poor performance by the Contractor:

> One hundred dollars ($100.00) for each occasion that the Contractor does not have the number of vehicles available for revenue service as specified by Community Transit in operating service.

The Contractor Perspective

The General Manager of Senior Services of Snohomish County stated that the high expectations for experienced operators and high wages are "definitely a draw" when recruiting operators. He explained that before hiring operators, they go through intensive training, and 60% "make it out." The agency looks for vehicle operators that have the following: "good driving records, good people skills, and want to assist people. Those are the ones that stick around a long time." The agency reported the turnover rate for operators is about 20–30%, depending on the month.

The General Manager reported that Senior Services meets the goals set forth by Community Transit. The 91% on-time performance standards are always met, and the general manager stated that they "never miss a trip." He explained: "We meet all goals. We don't turn anybody down. We really don't have financial disincentives happen." Although he is aware that the financial disincentives exist in the contract, the main motivation for Senior Services is to be a good service provider.

Reported Results

Turnover has not been a problem for Community Transit since they began contracting with Senior Services of Snohomish County, the contractor who proposed to provide high operator wage rates and to maximize operator retention to the extent possible. It was noted that Senior Services only loses one or two operators a month out of about 70 operators.

Community Transit believes that the combination of RFP language requiring a stable, experienced operator workforce and the contractor's natural desire to treat operators well and provide them with sufficient training has contributed to a paratransit system that provides high quality, on-time service, and satisfied and experienced operators.

Access Services, Inc. (ASI), Los Angeles, CA

Access Services (ASI) is a local public agency organized as a public benefit corporation that operates ADA complementary paratransit service. ADA paratransit service is provided for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (LACMTA) and 40 other fixed-route transit operators in Los Angeles County pursuant to the Los Angeles County Coordinated Paratransit Plan. In addition to operating the ADA

complementary paratransit service, known as Access Paratransit, ASI acts as the Los Angeles County Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA). It is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the Los Angeles County municipal fixed-route operators, the Los Angeles County local fixed-route operators, the City of Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles, the Transportation Corridor Representatives of the Los Angeles branch of the League of Cities, the Los Angeles County Commission on Disabilities, and the Coalition of Independent Living Centers.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

Service is provided by six principal contractors in six regions as shown in Table 10-2. Requests for service are automatically routed to the appropriate carrier based on the customer's telephone number.

Each of the contractors provides turn-key services in their region. Each provider except for MVT in the Southern region is responsible for taking reservations, verifying customer eligibility, scheduling rides onto vehicles, and providing service using ASI-certified vehicles and operators. GPI accepts all reservations for the West/Central and Southern regions and passes on a portion of the reservations for the Southern region to MVT. Each provider is responsible for all trips originating in its region regardless of whether the destination is in the region or another one within the Los Angeles Basin. Trips between the Basin, Santa Clarita, and the Antelope Valley require a transfer. Service is provided using a mix of ASI-owned vehicles, provider-owned vehicles dedicated to Access service, and taxicabs certified for Access Paratransit service.

ASI manages the system, providing contractor oversight and monitoring, and also directly provides customer service functions, fleet management functions (for its own vehicles), community outreach functions, and all administrative and planning functions.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

Access Services reported in the survey that it had moderate success with the inclusion of "living wage" and benefit information in the RFP. Evaluation criteria are used to evaluate proposals, and points are earned on a sliding scale. Criteria are based on the following:

- Comparability of pay (to other carriers);
- Quality of the heath care plan (e.g., the percentage split of premiums between the company and the operator);
- Inclusion of medical, dental and vision benefits versus medical only
- Family package;
- Number of vacation, sick and PTO days;
- Educational reimbursement; and
- 401K/retirement plan.

In its paratransit solicitations, Access Services supplies wage information by position for the current contractor; this includes the starting hourly rate, the top hourly rate, and any qualifying notes, such as whether there are annual or merit increases.

The two most relevant provisions in the solicitations are as follows:

> Expectations for Operator Wages / Retention
>
> The selected Proposed shall establish and maintain an employee pay and benefit structure, which will serve to attract and retain high-quality employees for all positions required to successfully perform the work. Proposer must submit rates and graduated rate increases along with timelines for the increases.

> Proposal Evaluation Criteria
>
> Access Services will substantially downgrade proposals that do not incorporate appropriate wage and benefit packages that will facilitate successful recruitment and retention of qualified employees. Access Services will also downgrade proposals that do not provide for reasonable medical benefits for all full time employees. Proposer should carefully consider adequate and comparable rates of compensation, public sector and private sector, which exist for similar positions within Los Angeles County.

Proposals are evaluated with both qualitative and quantitative measures. The quantitative measures are as follows:

Quality of Technical Approach	30%
Paratransit Operating Experience	20%
Cost/Price Proposal	20%
Employee Pay and Benefits	15%
Qualifications and Availability of Proposed Staff	15%

Table 10-2. ASI service regions and contractors.

Region	Contact Providers
San Fernando Valley (Northern)	MV Transportation (MVT)
Eastern	San Gabriel Transit (SGT)
West/Central	Global Paratransit Inc. (GPI)
Southern	Global Paratransit Inc., and MV Transportation
Santa Clarita	Santa Clarita Transit Authority
Antelope Valley	Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA)

The Contractor Perspective

MV Transportation's General Manager reported that wage scales have had a positive impact on vehicle operator retention, but he said that because of the competitiveness of the procurement process, the company is unable to increase hourly wages. However, operator retention is encouraged through increasing wage scales at 6 month and yearly increments. In addition, the company offers incentive programs for retention, such as a financial retention bonus, paid at multiple stages up to an operator's first 6 months of work. He also reported that the company's employee referral program has been extremely successful. If an operator refers a new applicant, and if the new hire works for at least 90 days, both receive bonuses. The general manager said that this program also "encourages the experienced operators to be mentors for the new hire referrals." Despite retention programs, there is about a 45% turnover rate.

As far as the evaluation criteria, the general manager suggested that "it is a good concept, although the current contract was renegotiated due to the current budget crisis."

Reported Results

ASI's Executive Director noted that ASI purposely did not quote a minimum wage rate in their RFP because in California, that would constitute ASI being an "implied" employer. However, in the past, ASI has encouraged contractors to set a vehicle operator wage above the minimum ($8.50), but in many cases, the wages came in at the figure. She said that ASI is exploring how to actually set the wage without becoming the implied employer of the operators.

The Executive Director also was quick to point out though that operator wage rates alone do not tell the entire story, reporting that the contractor with highest operator wage rates in the system was one of the poorest performers, and the contractor with the lowest wage rates was one of their best performers. In the survey, ASI noted that many contractors are still focused on submitting the "lowest bid" since operator wages make up the majority of the overall cost. She also mentioned that some of her contractors include a benefits package that provides English-as-a-second-language benefits, an operator recognition program, and "stepping stone" career programs and internships that pave the way for operators to advance to senior/management positions.

Madison Metro Transit, Madison, WI

Madison Metro Transit is the municipal transit provider for the city of Madison, WI, covering an area of 60 square miles. With more than 450 full-time employees, Madison Metro Transit serves an average of over 54,000 daily passenger trips during the school year. The service has 56 fixed-routes and operates a fleet of 204 buses. Its ADA paratransit service, Metro Plus, provides nearly 300,000 annual trips to 1,774 clients. Metro also operates Group Access Service (GAS) for Madison, Middleton, and Monona adults who live in their own homes and apartments, are over 60 years old, and have a physical or sensory disability. GAS is a scheduled, routed, group service to meal sites, farmers' markets, pharmacies, libraries, and grocery stores.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

Beginning in 2009, nearly a quarter of Metro Transit's paratransit operations are in-house, with the remainder of the work contracted to Transit Solutions, Badger Cab Company, and Badger Bus. All customers call Metro Transit, and transit agency staff either serves the customer themselves or delegates the work to one of the three contractors. Transit Solutions operates about 20% of the ADA service on weekdays only, with no weekends or holidays; Badger Bus handles about 30% of the requests on weekdays, nights, and weekends; and Badger Cab provides ambulatory services and takes over leftover ADA paratransit runs, about 23%.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

There is a municipal and county-wide living wage ordinance that is articulated in Madison Metro's RFPs. It states:

> LIVING WAGE (Applicable to contracts exceeding $5,000).
> CONTRACTOR agrees to pay all employees employed by CONTRACTOR in the performance of this contract, whether on a full-time or part-time basis, a base wage of not less than CITY minimum hourly wage as required by Section 4.20, Madison General Ordinances.

One of the contractors, Transit Solutions, adds to this livable wage by providing benefits and an incentive plan that pays operators for safety and attendance.

Madison Metro has also established standards in its contracts with penalties on a per-trip basis. Since 2006, this system of collecting performance data from contractors and then generating a percentage of compliance has been used to calculate this per-trip penalty fee:

> It is the responsibility of CONTRACTOR to make every effort to comply with all service standards established by CITY. CITY has established a service standard of passenger pick up no later than twenty (20) minutes after the scheduled time. For each instance in which a passenger is picked up outside of this service standard, the following reimbursement will be applied:

On-Time Performance	Reimbursement
94% On-Time	100% of the reimbursement rate
90–93% On-Time	98% of the reimbursement rate
Less than 90% On-Time	90% the reimbursement rate

> While the CITY pays the lesser of the cost of the ride or $3.00 for each "no show" a passenger has when service is provided by the CONTRACTOR on a per trip basis, this cost must be absorbed by the contractor if they are over twenty minutes late.

The Contractor Perspective

The owner of Transit Solutions commented that the "living wage" outlined in the contract is "great because it gives people a higher starting wage." Transit Solutions also has benefits for employees like health insurance, retirement packages, and paid holidays, which all help to maintain a steady workforce. In addition to the incentive plan in the contract, the owner noted that Transit Solutions has an incentive plan for vehicle operators that: "pays people for safety and attendance . . . all of those things play into recruitment and retention." The company uses the financial incentives in the contract with Metro Transit in a similar fashion with its other employees. The owner stated, "Overall, I think the system they [Metro Transit] have is reasonable and it works."

Reported Results

Contractors are almost always within the 94% to 100% on-time rate. Madison Metro Transit's Paratransit Program Manager reported that rarely, if ever, is the 10% reduction penalty enacted. Contractors work hard to meet the 94% compliance rate and have found that the only time they fall short is during bad weather (in which case the penalty is waived by the City). In March 2009, Transit Solutions achieved a 98% on-time performance rate.

It was noted that paying a living wage has definitely helped to retain vehicle operators. The Paratransit Program Manager said she believes this higher pay has also contributed to higher quality driving and service. She stated, "Operators stay when there is better pay, and they drive better, too."

Vehicle operator turnover at Transit Solutions is extremely low. In 11 years of business, over half of Transit Solutions' original operators remain. The owner attributes this to a combination of good wages, benefits, and hands-on management; he and his partner are present and available each day, and they make an effort to treat people well and with respect. They even maintain a special account for employee pay advances which are paid back via paycheck deduction at no interest. The owner stated: "We do things to help our workers and make it easier and more enjoyable to work here. And it really works."

Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), Orange County, CA

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) serves Orange County through bus, commuter rail, Express Lanes, and paratransit service. OCTA operates approximately 80 bus routes, covering every city in Orange County and several cities in Los Angeles County. OCTA also operates express service to Los Angeles and to San Bernardino and Riverside counties. OCTA's ADA paratransit service is called ACCESS. Most recently, in 2007, OCTA initiated a Vanpool Program to provide assistance to commuters who work in Orange County and live in neighboring counties.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

Until July 2009, OCTA's fixed-route, express bus, and ADA paratransit service were operated by Veolia Transportation. After July 2009, Veolia Transportation began running only the ADA paratransit service, ACCESS, utilizing a fleet of 350 vehicles. Veolia provides a turn-key operation, providing all day-to-day operations and vehicle maintenance on OCTA provided vehicles. OCTA has a managerial role and has close oversight on all service provided by Veolia.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

In the survey, OCTA reported that it had significant success with specifying a minimum or "living wage" rate in its procurement and contract documents, as well as including language regarding an experienced workforce and incentives or penalties in the contract related to maintaining an adequate vehicle operator workforce. OCTA also reported that they include strict and specific evaluation criteria in the RFP.

OCTA includes the following language to indicate its expectations for vehicle operator wages/retention:

> AUTHORITY recognizes the expense and negative effect of employee turnover. Therefore, the CONTRACTOR must demonstrate they have an acceptable recruitment and hiring program that is intended to minimize employee turnover and retain a high quality work force.

Several service performance standards, incentive payments, and penalties are also included, as shown in the Table 10-3.

The Contractor Perspective

The Project Director for Veolia reported a low turnover rate of 7%. He reported that there is a dedicated commitment to training which has paid off, as evidenced by the high retention rate. He said that with better training the company sees better results. He noted that another reason for the high retention is the benefits package provided to employees, including good health care, a living wage, and help with flexibility on travel to work, which is an issue in and around the Los Angeles area.

The Project Director reported that the incentives outlined in the scope of work are hard to achieve. He said: "In 36 months,

Table 10-3. OCTA service standards, incentives and penalties.

Category	Standard	Incentive	Penalty
ACCESS On Time Performance	95% or above	$5,000 for each percentage point above 96% on time	$5,000 for each percentage point below 94% on time
Service Delivery Failure	All qualified requests must be served.	None	$1,000 per occurrence
Call Center Hold Time	Average of 90 seconds or less	None	$1,000 deduction if monthly average exceeds 90 seconds
Call Center Valid Complaints	No more than 1 valid complaint per 1,000 passengers each month	None	$100 for each valid complaint over 1 per 1,000 passengers
Accident Report	Report all within 24 hours, verbal and written.	None	$5,000 per accident not reported.

we've received only one performance incentive. They are challenging incentives to meet." He explained that the complaint standard is the toughest and perhaps the strongest in the country, so the company has never met it. Veolia is striving to meet it and is establishing a new program with increased training for better results.

Reported Results

OCTA's Field Administrator commented that the contractor performs well according to obligations outlined in the scope of work. He reports that good communication between the contractor and the agency is the best way to have a shared understanding of expectations, since language in a contract can be tricky and interpreted in more than one way. He said that since April 2007, Veolia has maintained an on-time performance level average of 93%.

Palm Tran CONNECTION, Lake Worth, FL

Palm Tran, Palm Beach County's public transportation service, provides fixed-route public bus transportation and coordinated paratransit service. Fixed-route bus service is provided on over 30 routes, serving nearly all destinations in the county. Buses generally operate weekdays with 30-minute headways during peak rush hours and 60-minute headways during mid-day and on the weekends.

Palm Tran CONNECTION is the county's shared ride, door-to-door transportation specialized service. CONNECTION schedules all trips, prepares vehicle manifests, handles customer concerns, determines eligibility, and monitors the performance of transportation providers. Veolia runs a turn-key operation, performing all ADA paratransit functions.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

Palm Tran contracts with MV Transportation, Palm Beach Metro Transportation, and Two Wheels Transportation. The contractors operate 190 vans, providing door-to-door service for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and persons with low-income. The service provides an average of 4,025 scheduled passenger trips each weekday. Veolia runs a turn-key operation and performs all ADA paratransit functions.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

Palm Tran includes language in RFPs indicating that a stable, experienced vehicle operator workforce is expected. Understanding that a great deal of operator retention is determined by compensation, Palm Tran gives preference to respondents with the highest operator pay rates.

Palm Tran also includes a specific liquidated damage fee in contracts to offset the cost of uncovered runs. While this fee has provided an effective incentive for contractors to cover runs, there have not been many problems, and the fee penalty has been scarcely implemented.

The Contractor Perspective

The General Manager of MV Transportation believes that factors such as benefits, work atmosphere, and communication are key ingredients in maintaining a stable and experienced workforce. MV Transportation takes extra care in making the company an enjoyable place to work by providing full-benefits, substantial vacation time, and an open door policy with all managers. The general manager reported that the company no longer has to spend significant time and money

recruiting employees because the pay is higher than other companies. MV Transportation increased hourly pay for the Palm Tran contract, and the general manager reported that this has helped to retain operators.

The general manager also reported that she aims to maintain a stable operator workforce and works towards adhering to contract requirements. She uses the liquidated damages clauses set forth in contracts as incentives to provide good service.

Reported Results

Palm Tran CONNECTION's Fiscal Analyst reported that, generally, contractors perform well and meet their contractual requirements. There are rarely, if ever, any uncovered runs. Turnover has become less of a problem not only because of the RFP provisions, but as unemployment rates have increased, operators tend to hold onto to their jobs for longer periods of time.

City of Phoenix Public Transit Department, Phoenix, AZ

The City of Phoenix Public Transit Department is responsible for the overall supervision of the City of Phoenix Transit System. The City manages local buses, Phoenix Dial-a-Ride paratransit, Reserve-a-Ride senior service, RAPID and Express commuter services, and several neighborhood circulators.

The City's paratransit service is called Dial-a-Ride. The service operates seven days a week in almost all areas within Phoenix city limits. Dial-A-Ride serves individuals who are ADA paratransit eligible as well as seniors. ADA paratransit customers are encouraged to call at least one day in advance for service; where possible, same day demand service is also available after reservation requests have been scheduled.

The City also manages Reserve-a-Ride, a specialized, door-to-door transportation service for senior citizens over 60 years old and certified persons with disabilities. Reserve-a-Ride provides transportation to senior centers, medical appointments, social service agencies, and shopping. The primary responsibility of the service is to provide transportation to and from senior centers, and other trip requests are accommodated wherever possible. These two services, Dial-a-Ride and Reserve-a-Ride, are operated by the same contractor with the same fleet of vehicles.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

MV Transportation has been the City's paratransit contractor since 2001. MV Transportation manages all day-to-day operations, including maintenance on over 100 vehicles and scheduling service for both advance and same-day service requests. Out of the 300 or so MV Transportation employees, about 215 of them are vehicle operators.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

In the survey, Phoenix reported that it had moderate success when specifying that a stable, experienced vehicle operator workforce was expected, and also moderate success when including a "livable wage" requirement in its procurement and contract documents. While there is no living wage ordinance in Phoenix, the City understands that a livable wage scale is significant for job retention and stability.

The City's RFP requests a detailed plan with specific strategies for maintaining a stable workforce. The City encourages proposers to be creative in their approach to operator retention, stating that preference will be given to proposers who can successfully demonstrate to City their ability to retain quality operators. In addition to requiring the proposer to outline hiring, training, and retraining programs for operators, Section VII of the RFP asks proposers to respond to the following:

> Discuss the PROPOSER'S philosophy on providing a "livable wage" given the current state of the economy and how the proposed employee wage and benefit package and other innovative programs ensure that they meet that standard.
>
> Describe in detail the methods to be taken in order to attract and retain the appropriate staffing levels. Include any incentive and/or merit programs to award outstanding employees.
>
> Describe in detail the type and level of employment benefits provided or available to employees addressing vacation, sick and other leaves, health and welfare benefits, wage and salary classifications and progressions, and employer contributions for all programs for all job categories.

When evaluating RFP responses, a points system is utilized. The Director of Transportation Contract Services explained, "Our approach is that we want to make sure the company we hire is going to fulfill our needs as far as service—we take an approach of service over price." The evaluation criteria outlined in the RFP are the following:

Qualifications	50 points
Professional References	50 points
Management	150 points
Maintenance and Operations Experience	100 points
Understanding of Scope	400 points
Price	250 points

The RFP also provides a system of incentives and sanctions to reward exemplary performance and ensure adherence to performance standards, but the survey indicated that these incentives and/or penalties did not have even a moderate impact on contractor performance.

The Contractor Perspective

The General Manager for MV Transportation reported that the success it has had working with the City of Phoenix is due to a "successful, true partnership" between the two organizations. He gave credit for the positive working relationship to the City's understanding of the operation, saying: "[The Director of Transportation Contract Services] knows how our system works—he understands the nuts and the bolts."

The current average wage for an operator is $14.45, which is adequate according to the terms outlined in the RFP. In addition to a reasonable wage, though, the general manager said it is important to look for individuals who are customer-service oriented. He also indicated that a good work environment and other non-monetary rewards have measurable positive effects on turnover. He noted that these methods were helpful in MV Transportation's response to the City's RFP requirement of a description of "methods to be taken in order to attract and retain" employees. Annually, MV Transportation in Phoenix sees about a 21% turnover rate. It was noted that 83 of MV's 180–200 paratransit vehicle operators have over 8 years of experience.

Both the City staff and MV General Manager reported that the financial incentives or penalties were not a motivator to provide good service. MV Transportation does adhere to goals outlined by the City, and they have "monitors all over the place," indicating current levels of on-time performance, average hold time for a customer on the phone, etc. This keeps all personnel informed of the current situation and helps to strive for the best customer service possible. Regardless of whether the motivation for good service is the contract with the city or just good business practice, MV Transportation receives more financial rewards than penalties.

The MV General Manager also commented that RFPs and contracts should be specific: "The more specific the agency can be when putting the proposal together and creating the vision that they want, then the end result will be more successful."

Reported Results

The contractor for paratransit service has a relatively low turnover rate for a private contracted operation (reported to be 21%). A third of operators have been employed with the contractor for over 8 years. City of Phoenix transportation staff also reported that "this has improved service and productivity by volumes." The Director of Transportation Contract Services commented, "It definitely improves productivity and service quality when you treat your employees well."

On the books, the City and contractor have yet to experience a day with high numbers of closed runs. Budgeted hours from the most recent contract indicate that the contractor is always able to meet allotted hours, whereas before contractors in previous periods fell short of the requirements due to lack of operators, which caused the City to over-budget. For the past five or so years, the City has been able to maintain its budget precisely. Important to note, immediately prior to the most recent contract with MV Transportation, the City approved a sales tax measure that allocated more money to transit. In just a 2-year period, the City was able to double its number of service hours provided, and the contractor was able to provide an adequate workforce to meet this new induced demand.

According to City staff, the greatest challenge when negotiating contracts is trying to convince bidders to change their mindset or approach when developing their proposals. He said that most bidders are accustomed to winning a contract based almost entirely on price rather than service. He noted that in the Phoenix process, when reviewing proposals, the price for each bidder was not revealed to the evaluation committee. As a result, the committee was only able to evaluate based on the merits of the proposals. A City staffer expressed: "I feel that we had a successful procurement in that the successful proposer is still with us and doing a very good job, which was our objective to have them competing on the quality of service, rather than the price. By the way, the successful proposer was not the lowest bidder."

San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, San Diego, CA

San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) is the public transit agency that provides bus and rail services directly or by contract with public or private operators. MTS manages the scheduling, frequency of service, and hours of operation for its existing services covering approximately 570 miles in and around San Diego. Existing passenger services include 82 bus routes, three trolley lines, and ADA paratransit service that together serve over 3 million residents. ADA paratransit service is called MTS Access.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

First Transit is the contractor for MTS Access. The contractor is 100% turn-key and handles all operations functions. Vehicles are owned by MTS.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

In the survey, MTS reported that it had moderate success including (1) language that a stable, experienced operator workforce was expected; (2) requirements for proposers to provide wage scales, and (3) specific incentives and/or penalties for uncovered runs.

RFPs include wage standards, which are set to increase or decrease according to the market, thus creating a level playing

field for new bidders which allows operators to keep up with the cost of living and retain employees. New contractors must maintain existing operators at current seniority levels.

MTS mandates in its contracts that a certain percentage of each invoice is allocated to operators' benefits. For example, for fiscal year 2011, the minimum wage is $10.14/hour for training, $10.71/hour after training, and $11.27/hour base wage after a probationary period. The contractor is required to contribute 5%, or $2.10, from the base wage towards employee benefits. There is also a requirement that all operators who work more than 20 hours per week should have full medical coverage.

MTS provides a 10% preference to contractors who are able to prove in proposals that they are able to retain their operator workforce and who agree to retain their current staff upon contract. The evaluation criteria are as follows:

Corporate Capacity/Qualifications of the Firm	10 points
Corporate Experience	30 points
Key Personnel	50 points
Facility Plan	20 points
Safety and Training Plan	10 points
Start-up Plan	20 points
Customer Services	20 points
Cost and Price	70 points
10% Bidding Preference	23 points

MTS also sets performance standards, financial incentives, and liquid damages. These are shown in the Table 10-4.

The Contractor Perspective

The District Manager at First Transit reported that the livable wages clause included in the RFP helped to drive the company to meet the high standards for wages. The responsible wage requirement "helps maintain a level of wages that are competitive" and, in turn, helps to prevent a high turnover rate.

The District Manager also commented on the incentives and disincentives included in the RFP. "We have met the highest level of incentive thresholds for productivity for the past four years," he explains. He said that the incentives and disincentives were set "at a level where the dollar level wasn't significant enough." He noted that instead of financial motivation, customer service and good business practice are instead drivers for service.

The District Manager noted that the responsible wage requirement only applies to vehicle operators that are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement. First Transit operates under labor contracts now and it is expected that when the company responds to the June 2009 RFP, the responsible wage requirement will not be applicable.

Reported Results

Despite the focus in the procurement on workforce stability, it was reported that turnover has continued to be a problem over the past few years running at "upwards of 100%" according to the First Transit District manager. With the economic downturn, the turnover rate has decreased and has been running at about 40% for the past year.

San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans), San Mateo, CA

The San Mateo County Transit District is the administrative body for the principal public transit and transportation programs in San Mateo County: SamTrans bus service, Redi-Wheels paratransit service, Caltrain commuter rail, and the

Table 10-4. MTS performance standards, incentives, and liquidated damages.

Performance Measure	Incentive	Liquidated Damages
Contractor shall achieve a monthly no-show rate of under 5%	$2,000 per each month no-show rate is below 5%	Any month in which no-shows are greater than 7.5% may carry a damage of $1,000, and $2,000 in which no-shows are greater than 10%
Contractor shall ensure that all trips arrive within the established MTS On-Time Performance Window	$5,000 per month may be paid Contractor for each month that 90% or more of trips arrive in the MTS established On-Time Window	none
Contractor shall ensure that hold times don't exceed an average of two (2) minutes	None	$5,000 for each month where average hold times exceed two minutes

San Mateo County Transportation Authority. Caltrain and the Transportation Authority have contracted with the District to serve as their managing agency, under the direction of their appointed boards. The SamTrans fixed-route bus system consists of 54 routes (44 operated by the District and 10 contracted to MV Transportation), which carry nearly 50,000 passengers on an average weekday. The District's paratransit service, Redi-Wheels, transports approximately 1,000 customers every day on 83 buses, vans, and sedans, with some additional taxi service. RediCoast operates nine vehicles on the coastside and provides about 100 rides each day.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

Redi-Wheels, RediCoast, and a portion of fixed-route service are contracted to MV Transportation. For Redi-Wheels service, SamTrans performs ADA eligibility and marketing and owns, maintains, and fuels 59 vehicles. MV Transportation manages the remaining day-to-day operations. MV Transportation provides 15 vehicles, all sedans. MV has about 110 vehicle operators.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

In the survey, SamTrans reported that it had significant success with specifying a minimum wage rate and incentives and disincentives relating to an adequate workforce in its procurement and contracting documents. SamTrans emphasizes the importance of an experienced workforce in both the pre-bid meeting and in the RFP, stating specifically that operators must be fairly compensated with competitive wages and benefits. While SamTrans legally cannot require a specific pay scale, the transit district consistently places strong emphasis on a stable workforce, and staff monitors the contractor to ensure a competitive wage is provided.

The most recent RFP contained a specific section on Paratransit Operator Longevity, which is closely monitored by SamTrans throughout the duration of the contract:

> It is of paramount importance to the District and in the best interest of its customers that Paratransit Operators are not only properly trained, but gain hands-on experience in their craft. It has been the District's experience that a high turnover rate among Paratransit Operators reduces overall service quality through lack of efficiency and familiarity with the areas in which they operate. In order to indicate a high level of commitment, a Contractor must encourage and promote longevity of its Paratransit Operators. Proposers are required to complete and submit Appendix D, "Staffing Plan Summary" and Appendix E, "Wage and Benefits Summary," and disclose a plan to accomplish this end with its Proposal. Proposers should disclose information such as award programs and other incentives offered to their Paratransit.

There is also a monetary penalty if the contractor is not able to meet the daily demand or maintain at least a 90% on-time performance level. If the contractor fails to provide an adequate number of vehicle operators to meet the required level of service as defined in the contract, a $1,500 fine is instituted. The contract also clearly states that no trips shall be missed or dropped due to unavailability of operators, and the contractor is fined $500 for each missed trip.

The Contractor Perspective

The General Manager for MV Transportation reported that "We have a low turnover rate at Redi-Wheels, mainly because we have a very good pay rate and fringe benefits." Employees receive 100% full health benefits, paid by MV Transportation, which equates to about $10 per hour for health benefits on top of their hourly wage. As a result, the general manager estimated that the annual turnover rate is about 10% which he felt was "incredible in our industry." He also comments on the current economic climate, which has dramatically changed operator recruitment: "Before, it was difficult to find operators in the Bay area because there is so much competition for jobs in other sectors. Now, I'm finding 10–20 people a month looking for employment."

As for financial incentives outlined in the contract, the general manager reported that bonuses and disincentives in the contract have worked "substantially." He said that four of the standards, productivity, on-time performance, accidents/safety, and wait time on the phone, have huge bonuses and repercussions for MV Transportation if the company does not meet the standards. He reported that these financial repercussions influence his business decisions, saying "It is cheaper for me to add a person to the reservations taking function than to exceed the standards for wait time on the phone." Currently, MV Transportation meets Redi-Wheels' 90% on-time performance standard. The general manager said that the company has been at this 90% level for a long time, and he is trying to figure out how to improve it, but so far has been unsuccessful. As for productivity, he reported that the service operated at about 1.5 to 1.6 trips per revenue-hour.

Reported Results

The SamTrans Accessibility Coordinator reported the paratransit contractor experiences extremely low turnover rates, especially in comparison to others in the region. She noted that by paying just $1 to $2 more per hour, operator turnover was reduced significantly, making a clear case that paying a higher wage dramatically reduces turnover. She also noted that she believes the more experienced operators tend to be safer and more efficient, which is both a financial and a community benefit.

It was noted that while the monetary penalties have acted as an incentive for on-time performance, they have yet to be leveraged with the current contractor, who has consistently been able to meet the 90% on-time performance rate.

SamTrans also recognizes good performance by individuals and reinforces good behavior by making both the transit district and contractor employees eligible for the "I Made a Difference" award. The award, generally an honor rather than a monetary award, is usually presented by a supervisor to an operator while mid-route. The award has created a good atmosphere and appreciation in the workplace, which was felt by managers to contribute to maintaining a stable vehicle operator workforce.

King County Metro Transit (Metro), Seattle/King County, WA

King County Metro Transit (Metro) is a public transit agency serving more than 1.7 million residents in King County, Washington. Metro operates a fleet of about 1,300 vehicles, including standard and articulated coaches, electric trolleys, dual-powered buses and hybrid diesel-electric buses that serve an annual ridership of 100 million in a 2,134 square mile area. In addition, Metro operates the largest publicly owned vanpool program in the country, with more than 600 vans providing transportation to 5,000 people every day.

Metro also manages Access paratransit service, its ADA paratransit service. The program provides next-day, shared rides within three-quarters of a mile on either side of non-commuter fixed-route bus service during the hours and days of operation those routes are in service. In 2007, Access service provided over 1.1 million rides with a fleet of 300 vans.

Use of Contractors for ADA Paratransit

Metro contracts its Access paratransit service call center to First Transit, who manages scheduling, reservations, and dispatching. Two other private companies are then under contract to Metro to provide vehicle operation and maintenance. The service provider contractors are Veolia Transportation, which operates about 70% of the runs, and Solid Ground, a local non-profit organization that operates about 30% of the service.

Procurement/Contractual Provisions

In the survey, Metro reported that it had moderate success with including language in the solicitation indicating that a stable, experienced vehicle operator workforce was expected. Metro Transit also noted a specific points system used in the evaluation of prospective contractor proposals. The following language is included in the 5-year service provider contracts:

> The Contractor shall ensure that sufficient staff are hired and retained to meet this Contract's service requirements. The County reserves the right to reduce the Contractor's monthly invoice appropriately for any management or supervisory position such as Project, Operations, Information Service or Maintenance Manager, left vacant for more than sixty (60) Days.
>
> The Contractor's provision of qualified, capable and experienced personnel is essential to the performance of its contractual obligations herein. As such, failure to provide suitable personnel consistent with the County's contractual expectations as set forth herein shall be deemed a material breach of contract and subjects the Contract to immediate termination at the County's option. The Contractor shall ensure that its employees are qualified, capable and suitable to perform the requirements of this Contract and the County reserves the right to provide input to the Contractor in determining the suitability of any employee to continue performing the work pursuant to this Contract. The Contractor shall provide all pertinent employee records regarding incidents/accidents, passenger complaints, etc., to King County as soon as possible upon request.
>
> The County recognizes that the strength of its transportation program is built upon the strength of its operators. Proposers are asked to consider how they will hire and retain an excellent workforce.

Metro assigns points when evaluating RFPs to best analyze the proposed services. Typically, vehicle operator recruitment and retention comprise 18–20% of the total score. Table 10-5,

Table 10-5. King County Metro proposal evaluation criteria and points.

Criteria	Points	Percent of Total
Training program	25	2.5%
Plan to recruit, train staff and perform the work	50	5.0%
Evaluation of proposed team and key persons	45	4.5%
Proven ability to collaborate with contractor's staff	20	2.0%
Plan to transition staff who are currently employed with another operator so that service is not disrupted	75	7.5%
Record keeping and retention plan	25	2.5%
Customer service plan	75	7.5%
Pricing	200	20.0%
Other (specifics in contract)	515	51.5%

adapted from a recent RFP, shows the evaluation criteria and points.

Metro also includes a liquidated damage for runs that are dropped due to a lack of vehicles or operators. The relevant section reads as follows:

> The Contractor acknowledges that the provision of services pursuant to this Contract entails providing specialized, public transportation services, and that it is essential that safe, reliable, and efficient service is provided at all times. Liquidated damages may be assessed, at the option of the County, in the circumstances detailed in the table set forth below.

	Item	Requirement	Liquidated Damage - Cost
1	Route dropped or reassigned due to unavailable vehicle or operator	Perform all routes VSHs as assigned	$1.5 times cost for replacement service per VSH

Reported Results

Metro indicated that it is difficult to determine the impacts of these procurement strategies at this point because the contracts have just been awarded. A previous contract contained only minimum wage standards, which seemed to raise issues as several of the contract providers have had union represented operators. In addition to increasing wage requirements in the latest RFP, Metro removed the incentives related to run coverage that were included in past contracts. They indicated that the incentives in prior contracts related to run coverage didn't seem to affect contractor behavior, so they replaced them this time around with liquidated damages.

It was noted that vehicle operator turnover is a significant problem for King County. A commonly cited issue in retaining paratransit operators is that they often leave the industry for higher paying industrial jobs since they are required to also maintain commercial drivers' licenses. Metro is considering eliminating the CDL requirement, but still requiring the training to address the same content as in the CDL training. It was noted that operator retention has been better at Solid Ground. Metro indicated that this appeared to be partly due to the more extensive fringe benefits provided by this contractor.

Metro managers noted that they have recently established a new bid model with flexible start times which can vary within 1–2 hours per day. Operators will receive notification the day prior to service as to when they will begin work the following day. More and more operators have been sent home before a shift's end when late cancellations have allowed routes to be closed early and rides to be moved.

CHAPTER 11

Future Research Needs

While there is much research on the general topic of employee recruitment and retention, there have been few studies that have focused specifically on vehicle operators in ADA paratransit services. Given the importance of these services and the increasing share of total public transit that they represent, further research seems appropriate.

This study has identified some of the most important factors that impact the recruitment, retention, and performance of vehicle operators in ADA paratransit operations. A general model describing the many factors related to recruitment and retention has been developed. The model also shows some important inter-relationships, such as: the inter-relationships between compensation, turnover, and the cost of recruitment and retention; and the inter-relationships between compensation, turnover, productivity, and total system cost.

The research undertaken as part of this study has also begun to develop data that can be used in the proposed models. For example, the research has demonstrated a statistically-significant relationship between levels of compensation and turnover rates. It also has documented the degree to which experience and tenure can impact service productivity and quality and has begun to document the full cost of recruitment and training.

The research also has identified many examples of approaches and efforts that have been shown to enhance recruitment and reduce turnover. These include efforts that can be made by service providers as well as by transit agencies that are responsible for procuring and managing the provision of ADA paratransit services.

Much remains to be done, however. Additional research in the following specific areas is recommended:

- Continued analysis of the impacts of various types of compensation and benefits on turnover. While the information collected in this study suggested that fringe benefits are important, a statistically-significant link between benefit levels and turnover was not shown. This could be due to limitations in the data. More detailed study is needed to analyze the 79% of turnover that appears to be related to factors other than wages.
- Further study of the impacts of experience on performance. Detailed data was collected from two systems as part of this study. Using the methodologies developed, additional research is needed at other systems to validate the initial results. Additional study of the impact of tenure on rider complaint rates is needed in particular. As noted in Chapter 6, the two case studies conducted to date show conflicting results.
- Additional study of operator training programs and the relationship between training efforts and approaches on operator turnover, reliability (attendance), and service quality (on-time performance and complaint rates).
- Continued study of industry experiences with workforce integration and wage parity. This study indicated a growing interest in cross-training and integrating paratransit and fixed-route workforces. It also documented that significant benefits can accrue and that the costs of wage parity are often off-set by gains in productivity and workforce flexibility. Continued documentation of efforts and accomplishments in this area would be helpful to the industry.
- Additional research on the development and use of innovative procurement and contracting provisions. This study demonstrated that workforce instability is much greater in contracted ADA paratransit operations. It also demonstrated that, in contracting arrangements where providers are paid per vehicle-hour, it is important for public transit agencies to ensure that service is productive. Workforce stability has now been shown to be a significant factor in productivity; experienced operators have shown to be 8% to 24% more productive. Additional research is needed to document the effectiveness of various procurement and contracting approaches that are being developed to ensure workforce stability.

- Expanded input from vehicle operators. The focus groups conducted as part of this study were very insightful. Additional input from vehicle operators is needed to develop a more detailed understanding of recruitment and retention issues. This might include additional focus groups with operators, or exit interviews with former operators.
- Documentation of additional best practices. Several examples of best practices, identified through the national survey and follow-up contacts were developed. However, continued identification, documentation, and dissemination of best practices in recruitment, screening, training, and management of turnover is needed.

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APPENDIXES

The following appendixes have been published as *TCRP Web-Only Document 50* and are available on the TRB website at www.trb.org:

- Appendix A: Copy of National Survey Instrument
- Appendix B: Productivity by Tenure Group, DART, Dallas, TX
- Appendix C: Productivity by Tenure Group, LYNX, Orlando, FL
- Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Case Studies on Workforce Integration and Wage Parity

Abbreviations and acronyms used without definitions in TRB publications:

AAAE	American Association of Airport Executives
AASHO	American Association of State Highway Officials
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ACI–NA	Airports Council International–North America
ACRP	Airport Cooperative Research Program
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APTA	American Public Transportation Association
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASME	American Society of Mechanical Engineers
ASTM	American Society for Testing and Materials
ATA	Air Transport Association
ATA	American Trucking Associations
CTAA	Community Transportation Association of America
CTBSSP	Commercial Truck and Bus Safety Synthesis Program
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOE	Department of Energy
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HMCRP	Hazardous Materials Cooperative Research Program
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASAO	National Association of State Aviation Officials
NCFRP	National Cooperative Freight Research Program
NCHRP	National Cooperative Highway Research Program
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
PHMSA	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
RITA	Research and Innovative Technology Administration
SAE	Society of Automotive Engineers
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005)
TCRP	Transit Cooperative Research Program
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (1998)
TRB	Transportation Research Board
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
U.S.DOT	United States Department of Transportation