



Effective Messaging for Recruiting and Retaining a Strong Frontline Transit Workforce

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

A program of the **Federal Transit Administration** administered by the International Transportation Learning Center



Presenter



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Transit Workforce Center – Mission



The **Transit Workforce Center** (TWC) is the Federal Transit Administration's national technical assistance center for transit workforce development.

Operated by the **International Transportation Learning Center** (ITLC), TWC supports the workforce development needs of urban, suburban, tribal, and rural public transportation entities across the country.



TWC Services

Targeted
Technical Assistance



Registered Apprenticeship
(ATTAIN)



Transit Workforce
Data Dashboard

Trainer and Mentor
Development



Resource Center

Transit Core
Competencies
Curriculum (TC3)



Funding Information



National Transit
Frontline Worker
Recruitment
Campaign



Recruit • Hire • Develop • Retain



Fleet Transition
and New
Technologies



Industry Challenges

- Workforce shortages in public transportation (bus operators)
- Aging operator workforce; nearly half of drivers are over 55
- Increasing waves of retirement
- Industry will need to fill 20,000 operator jobs annually through 2032





Marketing and Outreach Research Program; Pilot Digital Advertising Campaign



TWC sought to answer the following questions:

- What **perceptions** do people currently have about transit careers?
- **Who is most favorably inclined** toward pursuing a career in public transit?
- What **values, messages, and creative elements** would most motivate people to consider a career in public transit?



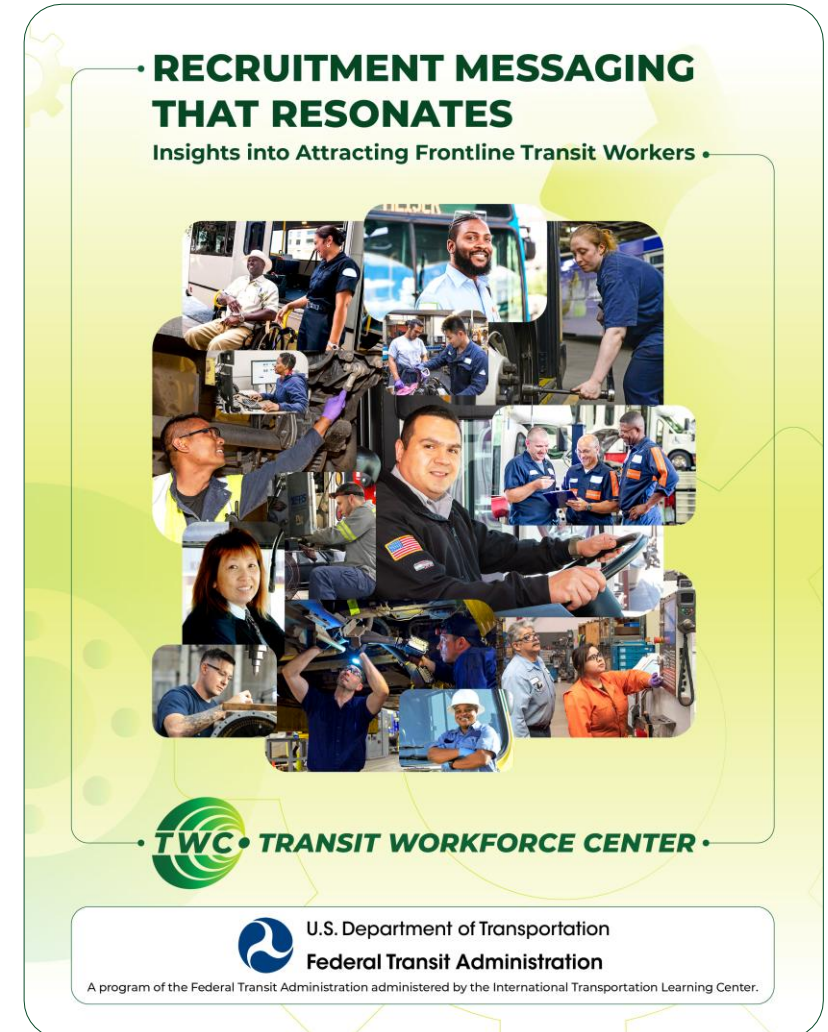
Basic Methods:

- Landscape assessment
 - Literature review
 - Stakeholder interviews
 - Data review
- National survey of targeted audiences
- Control group of the general public (individuals with driver's licenses and over 18)
- Focus groups
- Two-month test of digital messaging via Meta channels and programmatic advertising



TWC Report: Recruitment Messaging That Resonates

- **Foundational Principle:**
Your frontline workers are your most effective recruiters
- Distinguish public transportation from other career opportunities
- Clearly communicate your agency's benefits
- Broaden your recruitment reach by targeting a wide range of candidate pools





Your Workers are the Best Recruiters



<https://youtu.be/-0c2aWXzwJ8?si=hi9h3Kj69UshnAse>



The Most Effective Messengers – Frontline Workers



https://youtu.be/Bohz5qYlbYk?si=yJW5h24xk_i5t3q7





The Most Effective Messengers – Frontline Workers



<https://youtu.be/FNN8VbITLGA?si=x8ooTZ-75DJaWwJ6>



Findings: Receptive Audiences

Gig Drivers

- The most receptive among audiences tested
- High degrees of career mobility
- Lower incomes
- Low rates of receiving job benefits





Findings: Receptive Audiences

Veterans

- Recently discharged from the military
- Service involved driving or vehicle maintenance
- Positively receptive





Findings: Receptive Audiences



Job Seekers interested in automotive or transportation topics

Working Professionals

- Ages 24–49
- With 1–10 years of experience



Findings: Messaging Motivators

Aspirational Messages

- Personal advancement and rewarding human interactions
- Campaign tagline: “Be a driving force in your community”
- Emphasize service to your community

Compensation and Job Stability

- Strongest motivators for taking transit jobs
- Among mechanics, a steady job and job security were slightly stronger motivators than a competitive salary and benefits



Findings: Messaging Challenges

Strongest Transit Career Deterrents:

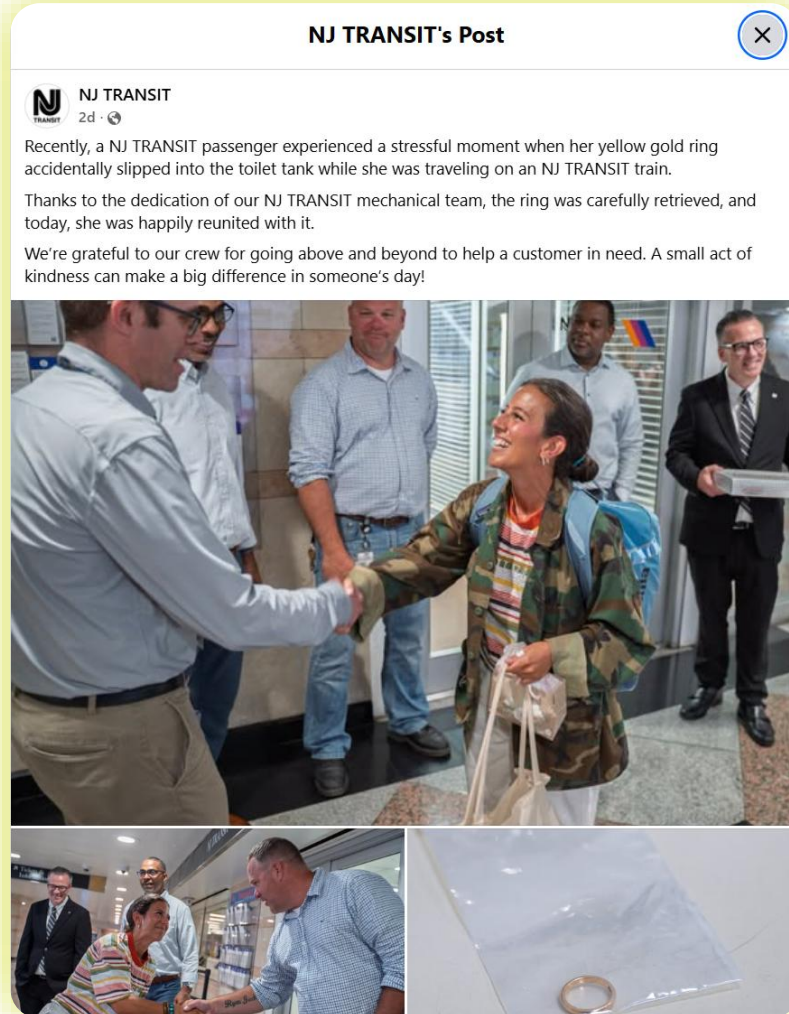
- Perceptions of low wages
- Having to deal with rude or unruly passengers

News and Social Media

- Significantly influence public perceptions of transit
- Nearly half of social media mentions about bus drivers are negative
- To help counter negative media:
 - Human interest stories
 - Emphasize the role frontline workforce plays in the community (e.g. meaningful contributions to their communities)



Findings: Messaging Challenges



NJ Transit Facebook post about the mechanical team retrieving a woman's ring in a train's toilet

What Works



**BE A DRIVING FORCE
IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

Put your passion to work in public transit.

[LEARN MORE](#)



**BE A
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YOUR
COMMUNITY**

Put your
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work in public
transit.

[LEARN MORE](#)



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TWC Resources: National Transit Frontline Worker Recruitment Campaign

- Resources developed to address recruitment and retention challenges among frontline workers in public transportation.

Recruitment Toolkit

Looking to recruit frontline transit workers? This toolkit offers practical resources, suggested messaging themes, mini case studies, and strategic guidance to help transit agencies and industry partners effectively reach and engage potential frontline workers.

Transit Career Explorer

Considering a transit career? Explore sample videos, information about the industry, insights into frontline occupations, and job search methods to help determine if transit is the industry that drives your career forward.

Transit Career Stories

Explore Transit Career Stories, featuring interviews with transit workers from across the country sharing their unique career journeys.



TWC Resources: Recruitment Toolkit

Recruitment Toolkit

Looking to recruit frontline transit workers? This toolkit offers practical resources, suggested messaging themes, mini case studies, and strategic guidance to help transit agencies and industry partners effectively reach and engage potential frontline workers.

Agency name + logo



**It's More Than a Job —
IT'S A CAREER**

- Job benefits
- Flexible scheduling options
- Health and other benefits
- Opportunities for advancement

+ special perks +

Agency info here, e.g. agency link, recruitment event info, additional benefits, contact info, address, phone #

QR code

- **Support your messaging with strong visuals that reinforce your themes**
 - Print & Digital Ad Templates
 - Agency recruitment videos
 - TWC mini case studies



TWC Resources: Recruitment Toolkit



**Building an Effective
Local Campaign**



**Transit Agency
Recruitment Videos**



**Transit Agency Print & Digital Advertising
Materials**



TWC Mini Case Studies

Recruitment Toolkit Component

Customizable Advertising Templates

Agency name + logo



Be a Driving Force in Your Community

- Job benefits
- Flexible scheduling options
- Health and other benefits
- Opportunities for advancement

+ special perks +

Agency info here, e.g. agency link, recruitment event info, additional benefits, contact info, address, phone #

QR code

Agency name + logo



Move Everyone You Meet

- Job benefits
- Flexible scheduling options
- Health and other benefits
- Opportunities for advancement

+ special perks +

Agency info here, e.g. agency link, recruitment event info, additional benefits, contact info, address, phone #

QR code

Agency name + logo



Many Routes to OPPORTUNITY

- Job benefits
- Flexible scheduling options
- Health and other benefits
- Opportunities for advancement

+ special perks +

Agency info here, e.g. agency link, recruitment event info, additional benefits, contact info, address, phone #

QR code



TWC Resources: Recruitment Toolkit

Transit Agency Print & Digital Advertising Materials

A sampling of advertising materials from agencies across the country that illustrate a variety of approaches and messages.

- [Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority – Massachusetts](#)
- [Central New York Regional Transportation Authority – New York](#)
- [Dallas Area Rapid Transit \(DART\) – Texas](#)
- [Greenway Public Transportation – North Carolina](#)
- [LA Metro – California](#)
- [METRO Regional Transit Authority – Ohio](#)
- [Metro Transit – Minnesota](#)
- [MTA – Maryland](#)
- [MTA – New York](#)
- [NJ Transit – New Jersey](#)
- [Park City – Utah](#)
- [RideOn – Maryland](#)
- [Roaring Fork – Colorado](#)
- [VIA Metropolitan Transit – Texas](#)
- [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority](#)



TWC Resources: Career Explorer

Transit Career Explorer

Considering a transit career? Explore sample videos, information about the industry, insights into frontline occupations, and job search methods to help determine if transit is the industry that drives your career forward.

The screenshot shows the 'Working in Transit' section of the Transit Career Explorer website. The header includes navigation links: ABOUT US, NEWS & EVENTS, INITIATIVES, RESOURCES, and REQUEST ASSISTANCE. The main heading is 'Working in Transit'. Below it, a breadcrumb trail reads: HOME > TRANSIT CAREER EXPLORER > WORKING IN TRANSIT. The text states: 'Interested in learning more about why people choose to pursue careers in transit? Use this section to get a brief overview of some factors that have motivated people across the country to make that choice. Hear directly from the workers on transit's frontlines as they share their experiences and perspectives, and learn more about the broad benefits of a career in this industry.'

Frontline Transit Workers Talk About Their Work

Current and Former Operators/Drivers

The video grid includes the following entries:

- VIA Superhero Recruitment:** VIA Metropolitan Transit, San Antonio, TX
- A Day in the Life of a TriMet:** TriMet, Portland, OR
- Apply to become an OAT:** OATS Transit, Statewide, MO
- What does a Bus Operator do:** MTA, New York City, NY
- NJ TRANSIT Bus Driver:** NJ TRANSIT, Newark, NJ
- MDOT MTA is looking for:** MDOT MTA Maryland, Washington-Baltimore Metropolitan Area, MD

- Created for a non-agency audience
- Hear from current transit professionals
- Find local openings
- Learn additional hiring info



TWC Resources: Transit Career Explorer



Working in Transit

Learn about the benefits of a transit career, and hear frontline transit workers describe their experiences working in the industry.



Career Pathways

See the range of positions and the various ways transit operators and technicians can advance in their organizations.



Wages, Benefits, & Hiring Info

Review national data on jobs, wages, education, and training requirements, as well as local transit agency data and sample local ads with position requirements.



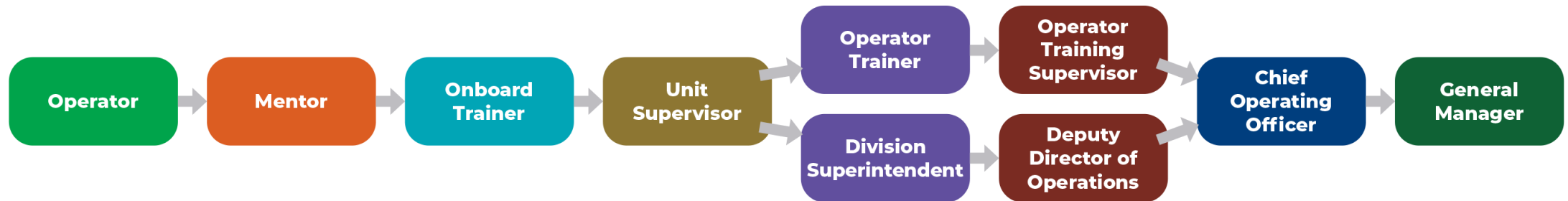
Locating Career Opportunities

Utilize a range of suggested methods and databases to find transit positions where you live or would like to live and work.



TWC Resources: Transit Career Explorer

Sample Bus Operator Career Pathways





TWC Resources: Transit Career Stories

Transit Career Stories

Explore Transit Career Stories, featuring interviews with transit workers from across the country sharing their unique career journeys.

- In-depth stories about entering the industry and the impact their roles have.
- Two upcoming stories: paratransit & multigenerational
- Tell Us Your Transit Story!

The screenshot shows the 'Transit Career Stories' webpage. At the top is a navigation bar with links: ABOUT US, NEWS & EVENTS, INITIATIVES, RESOURCES, and REQUEST ASSISTANCE. Below the navigation bar is the title 'Transit Career Stories' and a brief description: 'Transit Career Stories features inspiring narratives highlighting various career paths and personal experiences of current and former transit professionals who have built successful careers in public transportation. Hear directly from people who work in the industry as they share their career beginnings, paths, and what makes their work meaningful and rewarding.' Below this is a 'Tell Us Your Transit Story!' button. The main content area displays a grid of nine photos of transit professionals, each with a caption: 'Hooked on Maintenance -- Ryan Reynolds' Career Catch', 'Continuing to Serve -- Veterans' Transit Career Routes', 'Dottie Watkins -- From Bus Operator to CEO, With a Passion for Service', 'From Bus Driver to Finance Manager -- Jerry Gentia's Drive to Succeed', 'Elevating Insights -- Former Elevator/Inspector Journeyworker Leah Anderson', and 'OT Ozeas -- Showcasing the Role of People With Disabilities in Transit'. Below the grid is a 'Tell Us Your Transit Story!' form with fields for Name, Email, Organization, Union Affiliation, Current Position, and Past Position, followed by a large text area for 'What do you like about the transit industry?' and a final field for 'How did you get into the transit industry?'. The footer of the page features the TWC logo and the text 'TWC • TRANSIT WORKFORCE CENTER'.



Streamlining Operator Hiring Practices

This TWC research effort documents current transit agency hiring processes for operators and produced new resources to support agencies' operator hiring efforts.



Make your bus operator hiring process faster and more effective at selecting the right candidates

<https://www.transitworkforce.org/streamlining-operator-hiring-practices/>





Streamlining Operator Hiring Practices



- 12 new resources
 - Case studies, research briefs, fact sheets, diagrams, worksheets, etc.
- Many low-effort ways agencies can evaluate and improve their own processes.
- TWC is available to provide 1-1 technical assistance

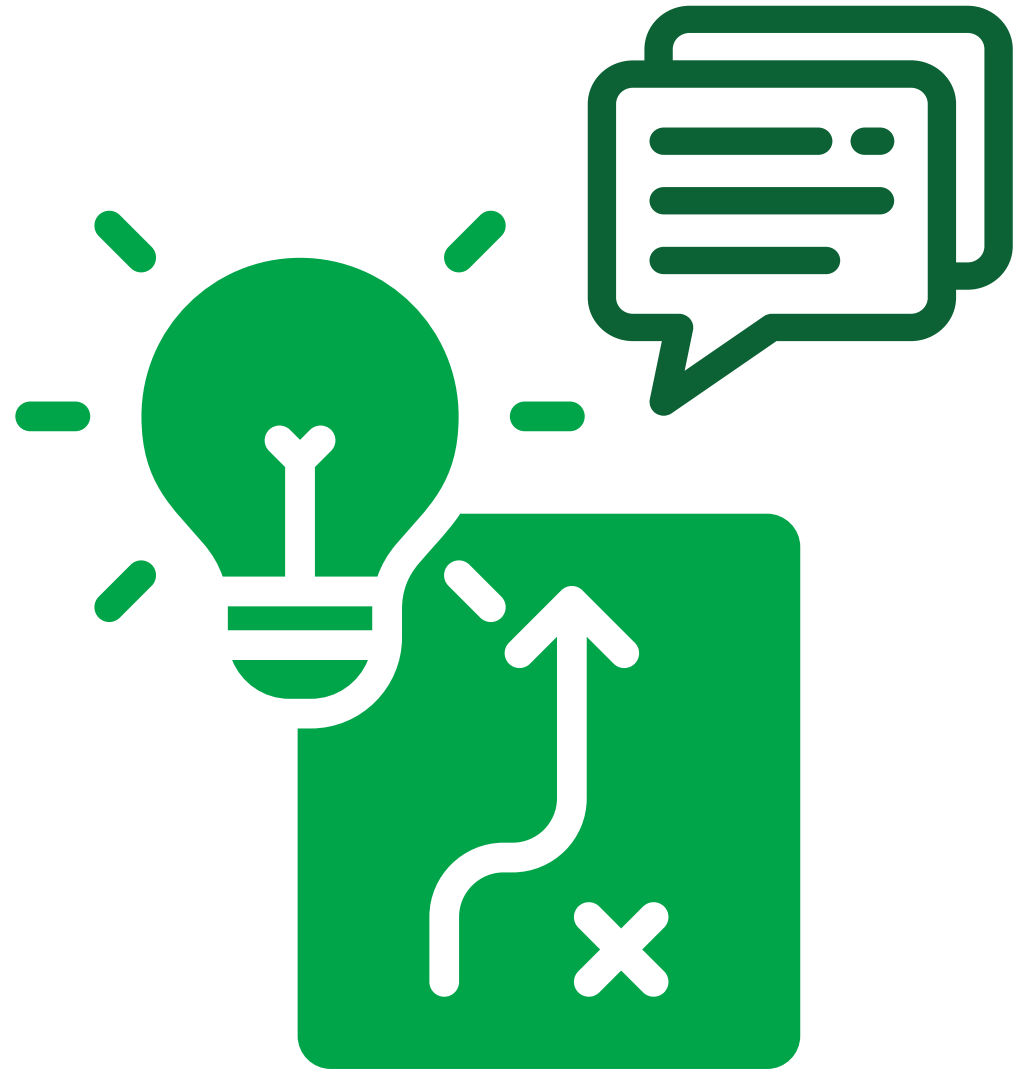
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Dialogue

**What messages
and strategies
have worked
for you?**





Dialogue

**What has
been a
challenge for
you?**





THANK YOU!



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