

RTAP Peer Roundtable Notes

Solutions to Driver Shortage

11/9/22, 10–11:30am

Participants

1. Randy Jahnke, Wadena County / Friendly Rider
2. Jeremy Monahan, Faribault-Martin Co. Transit Board / Prairie Lakes Transit
3. Torey Hunkus, MnDOT
4. Tina Neary, MnDOT
5. Melinda Estey, MnDOT
6. Cathleen Amick, MnDOT
7. Jennie Rowland, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa / Big Woods Transit
8. Michelle Lichtig, MnDOT
9. Lori Van Beek, City of Moorhead / Moorhead Metro Area Transit
10. Mariah Kathan, DRB Consulting/RTAP
11. Berta Hartig, DRB Consulting/RTAP
12. Stacy Struck, Prairie Lakes Transit
13. Mike Greenbaum, Newtrax
14. Joanne Brackey, Cedar Valley Services, Inc. / SMART
15. Christine Thompson, Cedar Valley Services, Inc. / SMART
16. Joe Wiser, Tri-County Action Program, Inc. / Tri-CAP Public Transit
17. Michelle Peterson, Tri-County Action Program, Inc. / Tri-CAP Public Transit
18. Shelly Rockman, Cedar Valley Services, Inc. / SMART
19. Shelly Plaum United Community Action Partnership, Inc. / Community Transit
20. Voni Vegar, MnDOT
21. Rhonda Torgesen, Tri-County Action Program, Inc. / Tri-CAP Public Transit
22. Kirk Kuchera, Cedar Valley Services, Inc. / SMART
23. Alison Carol, Watonwan County / Take Me There Transit (TMT)

Roles

- Moderator: Mariah Kathan
- Note taker: Berta Hartig

Summary

1. Impact:
 - a. Some agencies have limited evening hours and some have to take less rides in a day because they can only send out two or three buses for demand-response rather than four or five.
 - b. Fixed Route services reported decreasing frequency.
 - c. For agencies that operate in multiple communities, it has impacted the service they provide in some communities.
 - d. Agencies also report declining new opportunities to meet transportation gaps.
2. Solutions that are working:
 - a. Part-time drivers are working more hours.
 - b. Drivers who have retired have come back to drive.
 - c. Agencies are being more accommodating to applicants' work hours, flexible schedules that attract retired people, people who take care of children or elders, snowbirds, and farmers.

- d. One agency reported sending drivers from one community to another to fill in the gaps.
 - e. Added an employee referral incentive program.
 - f. Adjusting wage scales.
 - g. Provide a study guide for the permit test and do all the behind the wheel prep and training post hire.
 - h. Assign some drivers as relief drivers who can sub when needed and pick which day they can work vs being on a set schedule.
3. Advertising:
- a. Facebook advertising: SMART reported spending \$500 for a couple of weeks and geotargeted locations in the communities they were hiring in. They selected demographics of people who were looking for work, interested in charitable work and finding value in work. The last round of geotargeting was \$300 for 10 days.
 - b. Lawn signs at places of business.
 - c. Now Hiring signs at locations that were hiring.
 - d. Update to Online application process.
 - e. Signs/vinyl graphics on buses.
 - f. Employment fairs. Lori reporting having road supervisors staffing booths for a portion of their shift at employment fairs – retired people applied. The idea of not staffing the whole day to help with not tying up staff too long. Michelle at Tri-CAP reported they target seniors for part-time work and volunteer driver opportunities and that RTCC members help staff booths.
 - g. Newspaper ads that focus on wage and benefits and list qualifications further down. They also use testimonials from their drivers.
 - h. Someone else reported targeting school bus drivers and car transportation places.
 - i. Voni reported that Duluth Transit Authority recently had a “driver for a day” recruitment promotion and Mike reported that they do ride-alongs as part of the hiring process.
4. Staffing and recruitment challenges:
- a. Burning out existing employees.
 - b. Aging workforce means employees will be retiring.
 - c. Insurance requirements on minimum age.
 - d. Drug test requirement with marijuana being legal.
 - e. Losing candidates to opportunities that pay more.
 - f. Passing DOT physicals.
 - g. Passing CDL permit test.
 - h. Some agencies have to follow STS standards for background checks.
 - i. Workforce has shrunk / low unemployment.
 - j. Lives are stressful. People who are raising children or taking care of their elders need flexibility.
5. Opportunities:
- a. Maybe gig jobs are competing for applicants with bus driving, and as gigs decrease there will be more candidates for driving bus?
 - b. Attract candidates from other industries that share similar interest and use that language and benefits to attract candidates, such as helping people, or flexibility.
 - c. Transit is a stable industry, compared to the gig economy.

- d. People who are bored in retirement.
 - e. UPS drivers make great transit drivers.
 - f. Be more flexible for schedules to open your potential candidate pool, and it can help retain current employees so they can take care of home life when needed and have a clear head at work.
6. MnDOT employees attending reported that some RTCCs are working with vocational trade schools and also are experiencing a shortage of volunteer drivers.
7. Contact for more information:

Name	Email	Topic(s)
Kirk Kuchera	kkuchera@cedarvalleyservices.org	Facebook advertising (geo-targeting) Shopper News advertising Radio Advertising Online employment application
Michelle Peterson	Michelle.peterson@tricap.org	Shopper News advertising Senior career fairs for PT
Lori Van Beek	Lvanbeek@matbus.com	Advertising on their buses Booths
Michelle Lichtig	Michelle.Lichtig@state.mn.us	RTCCs to help support recruitment efforts for neighboring/partner systems by staffing booths, marketing and videos.
Transit Workforce Center's free recruitment resources	https://www.transitworkforce.org/CONNECTINGMYCOMMUNITY/	Recruitment resources

8. Action Items/Next steps:
- a. Notes and resources to be posted to RTAP website.
 - b. Agencies to share their resources with RTAP (Mariah) to share with group online.
 - c. Poll for topics for future Peer Roundtables – poll in this meeting's chat and follow up poll for transit managers via email.