

# IMPROVING ATTRACTIVENESS & RETENTION OF STAFF IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECTOR

OCTOBER | 2024

## INTRODUCTION

*The public transport sector plays a vital role in the daily lives of urban communities, serving as the source mobility in cities. However, staff shortages represents an increasing challenge and threaten the efficiency and reliability of the sector. From drivers to maintenance worker or skilled engineers, the scarcity of qualified personnel has emerged as a critical issue, and is casting a shadow over the seamless operation and growth of urban transit systems worldwide. This shortage not only jeopardises the quality of service (punctuality and reliability) of public transport services, but it also compromises the delivery of planned transportation services while incurring legitimate concerns over safety. It also poses questions over the overall sustainability of urban and peri-urban transportation solutions as potentially solid alternatives to individual car transportation.*

In addition, the demand for green transport is on the increase, as societies progressively prioritise sustainability and environmental responsibility. This shift is driving substantial investments in public transportation systems, leading to expansions and improvements aimed at reducing their carbon footprints and alleviating urban congestion. Accordingly, the need for a larger workforce — including drivers and other public transport workers to support these enhanced services — is continuing to grow.

This policy brief outlines 6 recommendations that increase staff retention and address the labour shortage:

1. Strengthening human dimension in tenders
2. Improving the employee experience in order to make public transport a sector of choice
3. Enabling data driven HR decision-making
4. Empowering the sector with a robust educational, learning and training capacity that strategically anticipates the demands of the business
5. Making authorities and regulators aware of the specificities and challenges of public transport
6. Enhancing the positive contribution of industrial relations (social dialogue)

In Europe, it is estimated that the sector lacks 10% of bus drivers required to deliver the service levels expected by transport authorities and passengers. In major public transportation companies, bus drivers can represent as much as 70% of the total workforce. (For example Transdev, the France-based international public transport operator, employs 102,000 staff worldwide, of whom 70,000 are drivers.)

According to a recent report by the World Economic Forum, there will be 2.2 million additional jobs for bus and truck drivers created over the next five years.<sup>1</sup> The same number will be created for mechanics.

These are only examples and insights for drivers and mechanics; it does not consider the challenges in other job fields (data, engineering, IT cybersecurity...) or other employee segments (youth, women) in the sector.

### EXAMPLE: 50% TO KEEP THE STATUS QUO, VDV

In Germany, there is currently already high demand for personnel in the industry; this will continue to be the case in the future, due in part to demographic change. Of the current 151,000 employees of the VDV (German Association of Public Transport), around 50% will need to be replaced by 2030. In other words, almost 50% of new employees will be needed simply to maintain the status quo. By 2030, of the 74,000 employees to be replaced:

- 40,000 will be drivers
- 20,000 work in technical functions
- 14,000 work in commercial functions.

#### Higher demand for personnel in public transport by 2030



Technical professions

≈ 20 000



Drivers

≈ 40 000



Commercial professions

≈ 14 000



▶ A bus driver with suitcase at Alsterdorf depot, Hamburg, Germany



▶ A bus en route in Karlsruhe, Germany

### The highest demand currently in driving operation (Germany)

Restrictions in operations for personnel reasons in 49% of companies in 2022

In which areas are you currently most urgently looking for staff?

1	Drivers
2	Technical personnel
3	Commercial personnel
4	Engineers
5	Trainees and students
6	IT specialists

Which advertised position is currently the biggest challenge to fill in your company?

Drivers	48.3%
Technical personnel	14.4%
Commercial personnel	13.3%
Engineers	7.8%
IT specialists	6.7%
Trainees and students	6.7%
Other	2.8%

C VDV | Representative survey 'personnel requirements in the transport sector' 2023

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/>

### EXAMPLE: PT SHORTAGES IN FRANCE, UTP<sup>2</sup>

According to the Bilan Social released by UTP (Union des Transports Publics, France) for 2022, more than 40% of the total number of drivers are aged above 50, while drivers below the age of 25 account only for 1% of the total.

The evolution of the sector's workforce needs was the subject of two skills and training needs assessments, carried out by the UTP as part of the AMI Compétences et métiers d'avenir. Three areas in particular professions are experiencing recruitment tensions:

- Driving (train, tram, metro, bus, coach): 50,000 new drivers will be needed between now and 2030. The estimate for coach drivers is 6,000.
- Maintenance (vehicles, infrastructure): These jobs are undergoing significant change as a result of the sector's digital and energy transition; a further 6,000 professionals will need to be recruited by 2030;
- Skilled jobs in engineering and R&D: These have been transformed by technological innovation (such as data, cybersecurity and AI) and the new challenges posed by multimodality.

By 2030 in France, 100,000 urban and rail transport staff will need to be recruited.

### EXAMPLE: CONTINUOUS RECRUITMENT, METRO LISBOA

Throughout the history of the Lisbon Metro, recruitment peaks have correlated with network expansion. However, in the post-COVID-19 period — from 2021 to the present moment — recruitment has been a continuous process in order to address staffing needs.

These needs have arisen mainly because many professionals are nearing retirement age (the average age of Lisbon Metro employees is 49 years). There are also shortages of certain professions, particularly high voltage electricians and works Inspectors, as well as electrotechnical and IT engineers. The latter is due to the lack of attractive salaries in public companies compared to the private sector. Employee turnover at Lisbon Metro has not been a weakness of the organisation, with an average tenure of 22 years.



► Bus Solaris Urbino elettrico in Regina Elena street in Cagliari

### EXAMPLE: CHALLENGING AREAS, TFL

As a rule, TfL experiences a relatively low turnover of staff; 5.5% over the last year. However, there are some areas where TfL have faced challenges in recruiting and/or retaining staff. In the technology and data space, TfL tend to have a higher proportion of non-permanent labour in roles such as business analyst, developer and testing. Anecdotally, this appears to be due to a buoyant demand for such expertise and challenges with competitive pay. In engineering and commercial roles, there also tends to be a slower rate of recruitment.

Over the coming year, TfL will be putting together an evidence-based strategic workforce plan that will help it determine what future skills it will need. This will be aligned with the type of work TfL is committed to deliver and an understanding of where it may struggle to attract the required skills (due to strong competitive demand and/or lack of resource with a specific skill-set).

Early discussions have identified 'leadership', 'project management', 'green' and 'digital skills' as a key needs. This is based on what TfL has committed to deliver in its current business plan (to 2030). TfL works closely with colleagues in the NSAR (National Skills Academy for Railway). The intelligence provided by NSAR suggests a potential skills shortage in the industry arising from retirement and lack of early talent. These are likely in the following areas: Signalling & Telecoms, Civils & Structures and Traction & Rolling Stock. TfL also engages with local London employer groups to both understand potential skills shortages and inform and influence current and future skills needs.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.utp.fr/note-publication/diagnostics-des-besoins-en-competences-et-en-formationen-des-secteurs-du-transport>

### EXAMPLE: 22% INCREASE IN HIRING, AC TRANSIT DISTRICT

This graphic highlights the impact of separations compared to the number of new hires since COVID to present date.



▶ CTM Bus Depot

#### HR executive summary (Jan 2022 - Apr 2024)

Retirement eligible		283 (Bus operators)				As of 5/6/2024, 283 Operators eligible to retire based on age, years of service
Separations		2022	2023	2024	Grand total	Total Separations trended down 14% from 2022 (167) to 2023 (144). Current total of 42 separations through April 2024 projects an average 126 total separations by year end.
	Retirement	60	34	11	105	
	Terminations	107	110	31	248	
	Grand total	167	144	42	353	
Hiring vs Separations		2022	2023	2024	Grand total	Total Hiring increased 22% from 2022 (171) to 2023 (209). Current total of 74 hires through April 2024 projects an average 222 total hires by year end.
	Hiring	171	209	74	454	
	Separations	167	144	31	353	
Net hires		2022	2023	2024	Grand total	Total Net Hires (Total Hires - Separations) increased from 4 hires in 2022 to 65 Hires in 2023. CY2023 averaged 5.4 net hires per month. In current CY2024 through April 2024, there are 32 total net hires, averaging 8 net hires per month.
		4	65	32	101	

#### Numerous factors have led to this labour crisis:

- ▶ **Demographics:** Many countries, particularly in Europe and North America, are experiencing an ageing population (the so-called 'Silver Tsunami'). This has resulted in higher levels of retirement among public transport workers. Attracting younger workers to replace the older workforce has proven a challenge.
- ▶ **Competition for Talent:** Public transport is facing tough competition for talent from other industries, as younger generations are drawn to jobs in technology, services and other sectors. This is leading to a smaller pool of candidates who are interested in public transport roles. Despite this, the opportunities offered by public transport operators, industries and authorities are both diverse and interesting. The transit sector provides employment in a range of vocations, including mechanics, engineers, drivers, IT and office workers. Despite ongoing innovation and changes in the sector, professional development for all workers is embedded within the career path, but is frequently unrecognised.
- ▶ **Skills Mismatch:** Public transport is undergoing significant technological transformation, driven by decarbonisation, digitalisation and automation. The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated the uptake of technologies such as contactless payments and integrated ticketing systems. Consequently, the sector requires workers with new job profiles and specific skills, which is contributing to the current shortage of qualified employees.
- ▶ **Work Conditions and Benefits:** Public transport jobs often involve irregular or inconvenient hours, which can deter potential candidates from pursuing careers in the sector.
- ▶ **Training and Retention:** In some cases, insufficient training programmes and perceived limits to career advancement opportunities within the public trans-



port sector are making it challenging to attract and retain skilled workers.

- **Diversity challenge:** The sector is struggling to attract women and young professionals.

### EXAMPLE: RETAINING STAFF THROUGH ALLOWANCE, PRASARANA

In Malaysia, the operator Prasarana has faced retention issues for technical positions, as their salary is not on a par with the market rate. As it is a government-owned company, it can be difficult to raise salaries. To address this, it has introduced a series of technical allowances to help retain staff, particularly technicians and engineers.



► Technical visit of Prasarana Ampang LR station, 2017

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS STAFF SHORTAGES AND INCREASE RETENTION IN THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR

In order to support public transport organisations in addressing and tackling the challenges linked to the labour market transformation, some key underlying principles are required.

- This policy brief emphasises that **people are at the heart of the public transportation sector**, and that HR must have a **strategic voice at every organisational level**. This approach ensures that the workforce's needs and perspectives are integral to decision-making and policy development.
- Addressing the skills shortage and other challenges in public transportation requires solutions that are both **collective and cooperative**. Collaboration between industry stakeholders, government entities, lawmakers, unions, educational institutions and other relevant parties is essential for developing and implementing effective strategies.

- **Skills shortages will be long-lasting and solutions must be structural**, reflecting the need for a comprehensive vision for the future of public transportation.
- Solutions and recommendations must address the significant challenge posed by **Diversity and Inclusion** within the sector. There should be incentives given and efforts coordinated to create a more-diverse workforce that reflects the communities served by public transport, promoting equity and representation at all levels.

This policy brief identifies the primary levers that — when deployed strategically — could help mitigate the challenges of staff shortages.

### RECOMMENDATION 1: STRENGTHENING HUMAN DIMENSION IN TENDERS

The public transport sector employs around 20 million people throughout the world. Staff costs represent two-thirds of the operational expenses in the industry. The human factor is critical to the safety and success of the public transport services provided to passengers.

Despite the self-evident importance of the 'People' aspect to the sector, human factors are frequently overlooked or insufficiently addressed during public tenders processes (for the market segment that is subject to competition between operators).

In reality, people are the essence of public transport. Making them a secondary (or optional) topic contributes to undermining the industry and its capacity to deliver services to passengers sustainably. It also detracts from any positive perspectives of those who have chosen to work in public transport.

In order to secure sustainable and reliable transportation services, organising authorities — as part of their tender processes — should **require that operators comply with defined minimum HR requirements and objectives**. This should be without exception, particularly for the following topics:

- Diversity and inclusion
- Staffing and recruitment
- Training and competences development
- Working conditions
- Social dialogue
- Subcontracting
- HR data reporting
- Workplace culture

Under the above-mentioned topics, the authorities would define their specific expectations and vision on the People dimension that competing operators should address and respond to.

The bid assessment methodology chosen by the Transport Authority should systematically **consider the HR propositions** made by competing operators (and the value they create) in a **proportion that GENUINELY reflects the importance of the human factor** in the sector.

Last, organising authorities should **ensure that the standards and expectations related to the human dimension in tenders are consistent** across a given area, especially when multiple public transport operators serve that area.

### **BEST PRACTICE: ÎLE-DE-FRANCE MOBILITÉS (IDFM), PARIS**

Île-de-France Mobilités (IDFM) is one of the largest public transport networks in the world, with 9.4 billion trips per day and €11 billion operational costs per year. Since 2019, the IDFM has been gradually putting its transport network out to tender. This started with the 1,500 bus lines, grouped into some 50 lots.

In the calls for tender, the following criteria were assessed: financial, technical and social (the latter initially accounting for 10% of the total evaluation). Without any further explanation of what IDFM was expecting in terms of social proposals, the initial responses proved to be aggressive in financial and social terms.

The first contract changes involved substantial changes to working conditions and remuneration scales, with social engineering that was not controlled by the organising authority, including the signing of agreements that were less favourable and recourse to subcontracting in many job categories.

These changes, which were deemed unacceptable by employees, led to unprecedented strikes on the first bus networks to be opened to competition.

IDFM therefore decided to tighten the social aspects of its calls for tender. It did so firstly by closing certain procedures already in progress, by increasing the rating for this criterion to 15% of the total score and — above all — by consulting with all stakeholders (operators and trade unions).

This has led to the drafting of a booklet of social requirements that define the minimum social standards expected of IDFM in several areas. These include working conditions, remuneration, use of subcontractors, social dialogue and the attractiveness of the profession.

This guide is available [on the IdFM website](#)



▶ Bus Solaris Urbino elettrico near Poetto beach in Cagliari

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: IMPROVING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE IN ORDER TO MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORT A SECTOR OF CHOICE**

Working in the public transport sector comes with some fundamental constraints in terms of work organisation (weekends shifts, holiday, early or late shifts) which highlight the importance of the needs of the populations for public transport services. Furthermore, budget constraints and/or fierce competition have led operators to adopt optimised resource allocation and work organisation strategies (such as split shifts).

More-attractive work schedules, workplace organisation and facilities (such as toilets, water fountains, changing rooms) could contribute to making these jobs more appealing to prospective candidates and thus contribute to the retention of talents.

Last, the public transport sector is inherently service-oriented, and passenger satisfaction is directly correlated with employee satisfaction. When employees feel valued, safe and well-supported, they are more likely to provide high-quality service to passengers.

To improve employees' experience and satisfaction, we recommend the following:

- Public Transport operational stakeholders (PTOs, organising authorities and unions) should explore and leverage **all available opportunities to implement solutions** (including new technology or organisational approaches) that can increase employee satisfaction and meet individual expectations while ensuring effective service delivery.

- We call on operators and authorities to commit to improve workplace and environment in Public Transport. This should start with mapping those locations and situations that should benefit from priority actions and contribute most to making the sector a great and inclusive place to work.
- In order to unite, unify, revitalise and increase the positive energy in our organisation's cultures, we encourage all operators and authorities to listen to the voices of all staff and to become employee centric. They should develop effective communication streams designed to achieve this goal.

### AC TRANSIT DISTRICT – NEW BUS OPERATOR (NBO) ORIENTATION WEEK – A HOLISTIC APPROACH

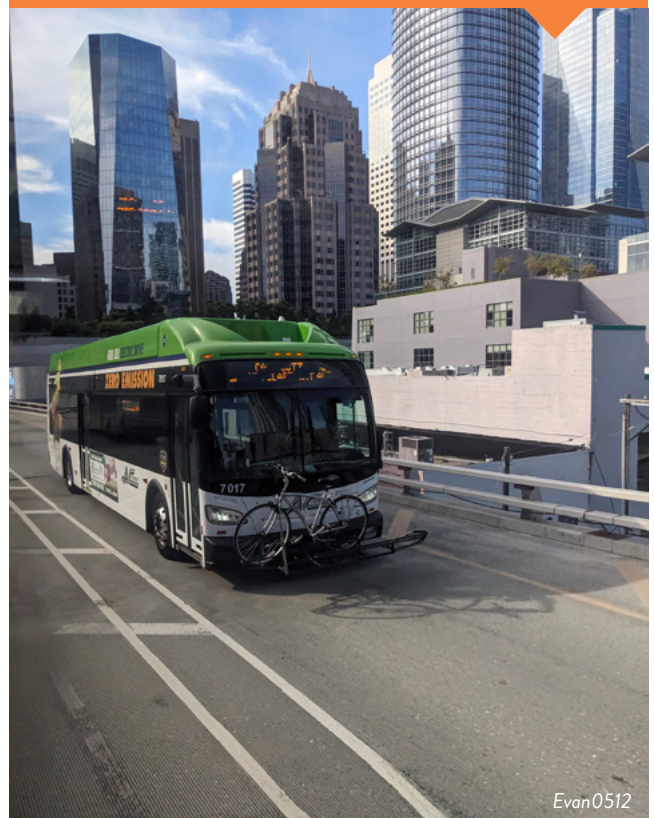
In April 2023, AC Transit implemented a new orientation and training week. It discovered that it was not just the demands of the job that kept people from taking on the role; sometimes, it was something much more basic, like a pair of shoes. During orientation, there are benefits on offer that are usually unavailable until after certification. There are occasions where trainees stopped showing up for training; when the district reached out to them, it turns out they lacked a proper pair of shoes or a clean shirt. AC Transit now provides shirts and ties to every new operator trainee. They may also provide trousers or shoes on a case-by-case basis. The district wants people who are capable and committed – the lack of a US\$30 pair of shoes should not prevent someone from launching their career.

On the first day of orientation, a social services agency, the trainers and HR personnel collect information and really get to know the new hires as individuals. AC Transit ensures trainees have a reliable way to get to and from their training location. This effort opens the door for NBOs to share challenges and obstacles that they may be facing with staff. On rare occasions, they have even provided temporary hotel stays and groceries to help unhoused trainees make the transition to the job. (Clothing is just one barrier that can make obtaining employment challenging for people experiencing homelessness.) This is more than financial

incentives—this is empowering people to become part of a community and providing the opportunity for them to make a difference in their communities through transport.

This approach was designed to encourage opportunities for open communication, dialogue and feedback. On the last day of orientation, new operators meet trainers at the division from which they are going to be operating. They meet with their new colleagues, as well as with IT in order to get logged into the system and find out where to get pay stubs. They then provide feedback to the recruitment team by responding to questions such as, “How has your experience with us been so far?” and “What can we do better?” NBOs are also assigned a mentor and begin with only a portion of potential route assignments as they ease themselves into the role. Peer mentorship has been shown to be effective in improving retention—as well as morale—among transit workers.

To date, this effort has delivered a roughly 10% increase in the graduation rate since its inception. This outcome underscores the success of our initiatives in improving employee retention and morale.



▶ AC Transit bus in San Francisco, United States

## TRANSDEV – DRIVER-CENTRIC SCHEDULING

For many years, Transdev has been committed to developing technological and digital innovations for the maximum benefit of its employees.

It was in 2020 that Transdev developed an in-house ‘Connected driver’ application, with which 80% of its drivers are now equipped today.

This app offers employees the possibility to consult their schedule remotely.

Drivers can, for example, directly request days off and rapidly receive approval, exchange services with colleagues or receive important information in real time.

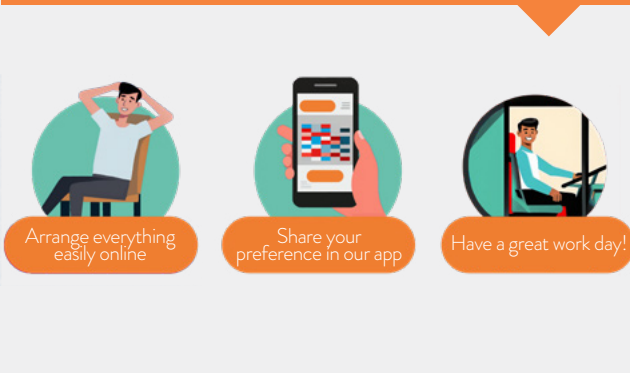
Two years ago, Transdev Netherlands decided to go further in terms of the flexibility offered to drivers. This saw it move from a top-down process of organising schedules to a bottom-up approach, collecting the wishes of drivers to design schedules.

The software integrated into its planning tools allows Transdev to collect the wishes of drivers in terms of work sessions and days off. This allows the PTO to match/optimize them to the services that need to be undertaken.

On average, 80-85% of drivers’ wishes are met, allowing everyone to better reconcile their personal and professional lives.

This system is largely sponsored by the drivers: 60% would not choose to return to the previous system. Young drivers in particular like this new approach.

This system is now being studied or tested in many countries: The Netherlands, of course, but also France, Sweden, Canada and Germany.



## GOOD PRACTICE: METRO LISBOA

ML has always been committed to reconciling employees’ personal and professional lives as a means of enhancing their satisfaction and, indirectly, reducing absenteeism.

Historically, ML allowed workers within the same professional category to swap shifts, days off, and holidays freely. However, this was a manual and bureaucratic process, handled by a dedicated planning team at a high cost to the organisation. Since 2014, with the use of an in-house tool using Access, Excel and email, information regarding workers’ shifts and days off is updated daily.

In 2021, ML introduced an online tool, MyPLAGO, integrated directly with the software (PLAGO), which manages long-term, short-term, and dispatch planning. Through this tool, workers can view real-time updates of their work schedules and days off, as well as submit requests to change shifts, days off, and holidays. They can also report foreseeable absences, ensuring the traceability and transparency of the entire process.

In 2023, an update to MyPLAGO enabled employees to access, in real time, the schedules of other workers within the same professional category, replacing the 2014 in-house tool.

In 2024, ML is testing a new MyPLAGO feature, set to go live soon, that allows employees to specify their preferences for shifts or time slots on specific days or over certain periods. This will automate the shift-change process, increasing the likelihood of meeting employees’ preferences while reducing the need for individual approvals by the planning team.

Looking ahead to 2025, ML plans to expand MyPLAGO’s functionality to include preferences for days off and holidays, allowing for the automation of the time-off and holiday change process.



### GOOD PRACTICE: DE LIJN AND GIRO ON WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO INCREASE DRIVER SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

De Lijn is Belgium's largest public transport provider, operating more than 200 million kilometres every year, with 2250 buses and 400 trams. More than 2.8 million people use De Lijn's services every year.

A critical focus for De Lijn is retaining and attracting drivers to its workforce of over 8,000 people. De Lijn realised that a positive and predictable work schedule would result in a better work-life balance for its employees. To make the often-challenging work schedules more attractive, a new concept was implemented — jointly with software solution provider GIRO — known as Personalised Work Rostering or PWR.

PWR allows drivers to tailor their work schedule to their private lives. If they want a rest day, an early or late shift, city service or regional service, they can indicate their preferences. Drivers receive their full work schedule for the following month seven days in advance; if they want to switch with a colleague, it is efficiently managed in the application.

The concept was implemented in all garages through a collaboration between GIRO and union representative. It was critical in De Lijn's efforts to attract and retain its workforce in Flanders. You can find more information here: [De Lijn \(Jobs als chauffeur \(delijn.be\)\)](https://www.delijn.be/jobs-als-chauffeur).



De Lijn bus in Gent, Belgium

### GOOD PRACTICE: KOELNER VERKEHRS-BETRIEBE (KVB) IN COLOGNE, GERMANY, IMPLEMENTED AN ADDITIONAL FIVE-DAY WORK-BLOCK ROSTER

At KVB, working six days in a row was a standard roster schedule for the vast majority of full-time operational staff (bus drivers and tram operators). Surveys showed that huge numbers of employees felt fatigue and high stress levels after working such a schedule.

In cooperation with the workers council, a new roster schedule was developed and implemented at the beginning of 2024. This allowed full-time employees to choose between their existing roster or an alternative four-to-five-day number of working days in a row (maximum) without any reduction in wages or additional costs to the company. The approach has been met with approval, with some 20% of all staff having adopted the new roster so far. Additional considerations for improving the duty roster principles are underway.

### BEST PRACTICE: ENGAGEMENT SURVEY, KEOLIS

Keolis firmly believes that the commitment of its employees is a crucial pillar for providing high-quality shared mobility services. Keolis is a people business — the organisation employs 68,000 persons in 13 countries and moves 3.4bn passengers a year. In this context, Keolis has implemented its annual engagement survey, a strategic tool aimed at measuring and improving employee engagement worldwide.

The engagement survey has four main objectives:

- **Evaluating employee satisfaction:** Understanding employees' satisfaction levels on their work environment, tasks and career prospects within Keolis.
- **Identifying areas for improvement:** Gathering constructive feedback in order to target those areas requiring enhancement, ensuring a healthy and motivating work environment.

- **Promoting a culture of inclusion and diversity:**  
Ensuring that every employee feels valued and included, by aligning our practices with our values of respect and equity.

- **Fostering a culture of shared leadership.**

To nourish the third objective, the survey is a powerful tool: each manager has access to the results for their teams within their hierarchical scope. They therefore can see perceptions and feedback in a structured way, enabling them to define and implement action plans to strengthen team engagement.

The 2024 results are very encouraging. Employee engagement within the group exceeds 8/10 (87% give positive answers) and the answer to the question “I want to give my best” receives a score of 8.5/10.

The engagement survey is an essential tool for Keolis, aligned with its mission to provide safe, smart and sustainable mobility solutions while ensuring a fulfilling work environment for its employees.

This brings many advantages:

- It makes it easier for recruitment teams to focus on specific and more accessible profiles.
- It has allowed us to implement projects such as ‘School Zero’, where we train people with little experience through a 3-month intensive driving course. This strategy has given us the opportunity to integrate 100 people into the organisation in a short period of time.
- Drivers see that growth opportunities are accessible after a certain amount of time, it motivates them to show good performance and be eligible for possible promotion. With this, we have retained drivers and reduced turnover.

### RECOMMENDATION 3: ENABLING DATA DRIVEN HR DECISION-MAKING

Collecting data is crucial in order to better predict how jobs will evolve, changes in competencies required and any trends in the labour market. This allows stakeholders to address these proactively or adapt to any changes.

In the realm of human resources, it is imperative to foster a unified data culture to achieve the following objectives for the sector:

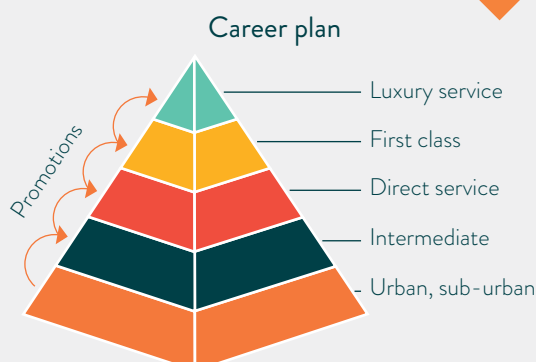
First, maintaining an up-to-date understanding of HR-related matters is essential. This involves continually gathering and analysing data on employee demographics, job satisfaction and skill levels, in order to stay informed about the workforce’s current state. For example, tracking employee turnover rates and reasons for leaving can help identify and address underlying issues promptly.

Second, enhancing the ability to assess and foresee risks and to deal with challenges effectively, is critical. By leveraging data analytics, HR professionals can help predict potential disruptions, such as skill shortages or shifts in labour demand and to develop strategies to mitigate these risks. For example, analysing retirement rates trends can help in planning for future hiring needs.

Third, facilitating decision-making on the required design and scale of initiatives and solutions is vital. Data-driven insights enable HR departments to make informed decisions on training programmes, recruitment strategies and employee engagement initiatives. For example, data on employee performance and training outcomes can guide the development of targeted training programmes to address specific skill gaps.

### BEST PRACTICE: MOBILITY ADO MEXICO

Mobility ADO has a broad portfolio of service segments, which include urban, commuter and long distance bus services, ranging from economy to luxury segments. In order to retain drivers, Mobility ADO has a defined career plan scheme, which ensures promotion opportunities at all times, generating dynamism in the organisation. The driver can see that there are real options for professional growth. It has been decided that all new recruits must start their career from the services considered the base of the pyramid.



Last, evaluating the sector's advancement and progress over time is important for continuous improvement. Regularly reviewing data on KPIs allows stakeholders to measure the effectiveness of strategies implemented and make adjustments where necessary. For example, tracking the impact of a new employee wellness programme on productivity and job satisfaction can help determine its level of success and areas for further enhancement.

For all these reasons, we recommend implementing a structured approach to collecting HR-anonymised data at a given level (organisational, municipal and/or regional). In such approach:

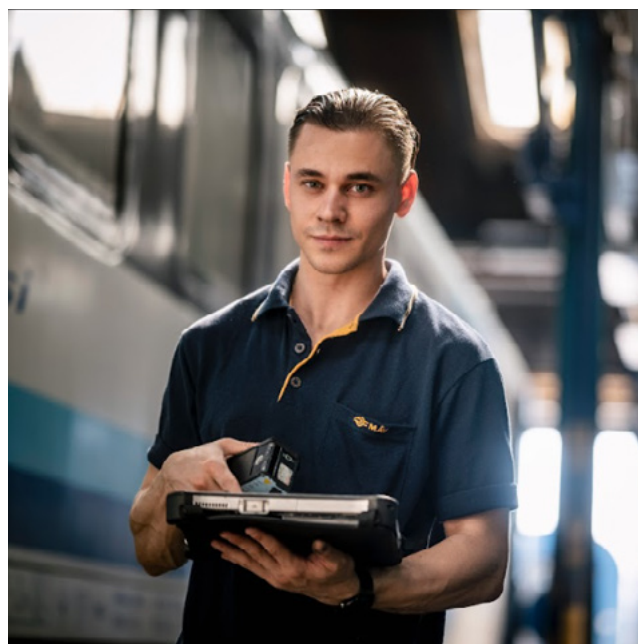
- Data should be collected from operators within a region or country, according to agreed indicators established by a recognised and trusted governing body.
- Data collection frameworks should provide clear definitions of terms as well as harmonised methodologies for calculating indicators.
- Consolidated HR data could provide a robust basis for the following:
  - Empowering each PTO to benchmark its situation against the broader context and take actions accordingly.
  - Enabling stakeholders in the territory to identify and anticipate those risks that could be better addressed collectively.
  - Enabling public transportation authorities — where relevant — to specify their expectations from operators in the HR field.

Produced annually by UTP (Union des Transports Publics, France), the 'Urban Transports social report' is based on responses to an online questionnaire by urban transport companies, and includes the main social data for the profession, including: urban transport company workforce, working hours, absenteeism, wages and salaries and vocational training.

The results presented in the social report are based on an identical panel of companies over three consecutive years. A panel of 131 companies was thus obtained.

The social report acts as the reference document for collective labour negotiations and the work of the observatory for trades and qualifications in the urban transport sector.

<https://www.utp.fr/article/bilan-social-transports-urbains-2022-edition-2023>



▶ MAV Start Employee, Hungary

#### RECOMMENDATION 4: EMPOWERING THE SECTOR WITH A ROBUST EDUCATIONAL, LEARNING AND TRAINING CAPACITY THAT STRATEGICALLY ANTICIPATES THE DEMANDS OF THE BUSINESS

In the PT industry, various jobs don't always receive credit for the specific skills they require. Despite some regional and national initiatives, there is a general lack of capacity-building centres within the sector globally.

- In terms of quantity, there are insufficient centres equipped to train new entrants to the PT sector through their initial training and education programmes. In addition, there are a lack of facilities to support the continuous development of skills and talents for those already employed in the sector. This means that many aspiring and current PT employees cannot access the training resources they need to enter or progress their career in the PT sector.
- In terms of quality, the existing training programmes often fall short in addressing the specific needs of PT professions. Effective capacity-building centres should provide comprehensive training designed to cater to the unique requirements of the industry, ensuring that both new recruits and experienced workers receive relevant and high-quality education. This would involve designing and implementing training modules tailored to the specific practical and technical demands of public transport roles, thereby enhancing the overall competency and professionalism within the sector.

Furthermore, the sector is facing skills shortage and strong competition in the hiring market. This competition exists not only between different PTOs within the same regions but also extends to other industries altogether.

We recommend the following:

- **All stakeholders\*** should participate in **collaborative initiatives** aimed at defining and implementing the necessary training and educational endeavours needed to address the region's skill demands comprehensively. Such initiatives must be implemented at the appropriate level, be it municipal, regional or national, in order to ensure they are effective and relevant for each specific ecosystem.
- Such initiatives could involve **establishing sector-specific training centres to provide specialised training and educational curriculums** focused on the current and future skill needs of the industry.

\* *All stakeholders' encompasses: PTOs and organising authorities as well as – among others – related regional governmental authorities, administrations, national education systems, unions and related training organisations within the territory.*

### GOOD PRACTICE: CTM (CAGLIARI)

The region lacks the structure to deliver the technical training required to meet the needs of those interested in entering the public transport sector. We have therefore established – in collaboration with a local temporary agency work – a new project entitled 'Drivers' Academy', which should help us to hire and train new drivers.

One of the biggest issues is the high cost of the driving licenses; normally, people who want to become a driver have to face this issue. The Academy makes the funds available so that those who are really motivated to pursue a career as a driver can do so without hesitation. The funds come from the national fund for temporary workers; the investment for a class of 40 people is around €120.000 (approximately €2,500 per person).

Thanks to the Academy, those candidates without a driving license category D and CQC can attend and obtain them for free. The training course takes approximately three months (not including the period required to book and pass the exam). At the end their course, trainees can work in CTM as drivers, increase their experience, improve their professional skills and attend our personnel selections.

## PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE, A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND TRADE-UNIONS IN FINLAND

Developing qualification structures and vocational qualifications are vital, both for companies to be able to find qualified staff and for employees to be able to keep a high employability on the job market.

In Finland, it is the responsibility of the different specific 'Business and Industry Committees' to ensure the quality and working life orientation of Finnish vocational education and training. Each committee is composed of representatives from the:

- employers' association and/or companies
- trade unions and/or employees
- education sector.

The Committee's duties encompass:

- Quality assurance – ensuring the quality of the implementation of competence demonstrations and competence assessment.
- Development – participating in developing qualification structures and vocational qualifications
- Rectification requests – processing rectification requests

In addition, the logistics committee dealing with all vocational qualifications of transport and logistics (bus, coach, goods transport, warehouses) also has a specific task under national legislation. It is responsible for arranging and supervising the professional competence test (CPC) for lorry and bus drivers (initial qualification, Dir. 2022/2561/EU) and for the drivers' certificates upon successful completion of the test.



Tom Brunberg

Trams in Helsinki, Finland



## BEST PRACTICE OUTSIDE OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR: UIMM

The UIMM, the French employers' organisation for the metalworking industry (42,000 companies and 1.6 million employees), has been involved in vocational training and apprenticeships since the 1920s. To meet the recruitment and skills needs of French industrial companies, it set up its own regional network of vocational training and apprenticeship bodies in the 1980s, to compensate for the shortcomings of existing public or private training provision. This network is run by the territorial UIMM organisations to offer a local response to young people, jobseekers and employees. It also promotes development of industrial apprenticeships (from vocational training certificates to engineering qualifications), experiments with innovative teaching methods and implements the joint vocational certification policy by developing a "joint qualification certificate for the metallurgy industry".

The UIMM Training Centres offer local services at 136 sites throughout France, enabling them to meet the mobility needs of young people and jobseekers as well as maintaining close links with local businesses.

This territorial network is complemented by solid, complementary partnerships with around 150 partners (including 82 engineering schools, universities and public or private secondary schools under contract).

Finally, the organisation relies on a joint observatory that produces studies by sector, business line and region, and that tracks changes and major sectoral trends.

<https://uimm.lafabriquedelavenir.fr/industrie/>



► MAV Start Employee, Hungary

## RECOMMENDATION 5: MAKING AUTHORITIES AND REGULATORS AWARE OF THE SPECIFICITIES AND CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The public transport sector is undeniably **essential**, a fact underscored by the COVID-19 crisis. During the pandemic, public transport played a vital role in the daily lives of citizens, providing a reliable means for essential workers to commute and for communities to remain connected.

Furthermore, public transport is **indispensable to local governments**, as it is a cornerstone of their efforts achieving their sustainability targets and improving urban air quality.

Given its vital importance, it is essential that public transport be recognised and prioritised by local authorities and governments. This recognition should extend to **understanding and addressing the unique challenges and specificities** of the sector, particularly those of its workforce.

To achieve this:

- We call upon operators and authorities to **engage in continuous dialogue** on ongoing challenges, specificities and future needs. The sector should establish forums or working groups that include operators, local governments and regulators in order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the sector's dynamics.
- We encourage **public transport operators to ensure that they are adequately organised or staffed in order to be able to understand and navigate bureaucracy and applicable regulations.**
- We encourage the sector and its counterparts within the authorities' organisations to **establish channels for dialogue** to identify those administrative and regulatory pain points / bottlenecks that could be adjusted to meet the specificities and needs of the sector:
- Labour law, foreign workforce regulation, administrative processes: authorities should create the right conditions to welcome foreign workers.
- Access to specific funding schemes (regional, national, international...) including for education and training.

### GOOD PRACTICE: OC TRANSP0, OTTAWA

OC Transpo is the organisation that plans and operates public transportation in the city of Ottawa, Canada. Like many transit operators, it faces staff shortages, particularly among drivers. While OC Transpo does not actively recruit workers abroad, it often relies on organisations facilitating the arrival of newcomers to Canada and helping them integrate into the job market.

Managing the arrival of immigrants is primarily the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada, more specifically [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#). Through their online portal, resources are made available to job seekers abroad who are already qualified in certain fields, including in skilled trades. For such workers, there are three programmes, all part of the [Express Entry system](#).

Of course, applicants must meet certain requirements for work experience, qualifications and language skills. For skilled trades in the province of Ontario, these equivalencies and qualifications are overseen by [Skilled Trades Ontario](#).

Finally, to facilitate the hiring process of candidates already in Canada and looking for a job as a bus operator — the position for which OC Transpo is recruiting most actively — the prerequisite for citizenship is simply that the candidate be legally allowed to work in Canada, such as through a visa, work permit or landed immigrant status. This criterion opens up employment opportunities to a larger pool of candidates with various ‘permissions’ to work in the country.

### GOOD PRACTICE: VDV EMPLOYERS’ INITIATIVE

The Association of German Transport Companies (VDV), as the country’s industry association for public transport, maintains an ongoing dialogue

with policymakers and business. There are around 700 member companies in the VDV, representing both public passenger (ÖPNV) and rail freight (SGV) transport sectors.

The main objectives of the VDV and its member companies include promoting sustainability, improving economic efficiency and increasing customer orientation in public transport. To achieve these goals requires well-thought-out financing options, an appropriate legal framework and appropriately trained specialist personnel.

The VDV Employers’ Initiative has therefore launched — among other measures — a new project to address the existing personnel shortage, in cooperation with the social enterprise ‘socialbee’. The aim is to recruit refugees and migrants and to permanently integrate them as skilled workers for well-known companies. This initiative aims to help meet the demand for qualified personnel in various sectors while promoting the integration of newcomers into German society, culture and the labour market.

The association is committed to creating these conditions and to advancing the development of public transport and SGV.

### GOOD PRACTICE

In 2023, Portugal restructured its legal framework to streamline the recruitment of Portuguese-speaking workers by coordinating the visa exemption process with entry procedures. This approach facilitates hiring employees who speak the same language, effectively addressing labour shortages in the country. This visa framework is designed to support the effective integration of Portuguese-speaking professionals into the workforce, addressing the demand for skilled personnel in various sectors.

That same year, Carris Metropolitana hired 23 Cape Verdean drivers to operate buses for Alsa Todi, the concessionaire for Carris Metropolitana. The arrival of these professionals from Cape Verde enabled Alsa Todi to overcome initial challenges in providing transportation services.

A key part of this framework is the Residence Visa for Job Seekers, which allows individuals to enter Portugal to search for employment for an initial period of 120 days, with the possibility of extending it for an additional 60 days. During this time, applicants must secure a job, and once employed, can apply for a residence permit based on their employment contract.

#### Key features

- Duration: Initial 120 days, extendable by 60 days.
- Objective: Enables job seekers to find employment and obtain a residence permit.
- Eligibility: Open to all nationalities, with a simplified process for Portuguese-speaking applicants.

#### Legal Framework:

- Governed by Portuguese Law No. 23/2007 of 4 July, which outlines the conditions for entry and residence in Portugal.
- Detailed regulations provided by Regulatory Decree No. 84/2007 of 5 November.



➤ Bus stop signage from Carris Metropolitana

## RECOMMENDATION 6: ENHANCING THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (SOCIAL DIALOGUE)

Both employers and trade unions acknowledge that, in the coming years, the most pressing challenge will be addressing the staff shortages — in particular, drivers — and making the sector more appealing for underrepresented groups, such as younger workers and women.

Trade unions, as part of their mandate to represent the rights and interests of their members, can be pivotal in tackling workplace issues such as staffing shortages. They can advocate for better working conditions, fair wages and comprehensive training programmes that enhance both job satisfaction and retention. However, it is important to recognise that the ultimate responsibility for workforce development, including recruitment and retention strategies, rests with the employer.

Despite this demarcation of responsibilities, a **joint approach between social partners — employers and trade unions — at all levels (local, regional, national, European and international) can help create a more stable and productive working environment.** Such a joint effort can involve regular dialogue and negotiations to ensure that both parties are aligned in their objectives and strategies.

This joint approach should address areas as diverse as:

- Accompanying the introduction of new technologies
- Identifying new job profiles and skill gaps and developing adequate training programmes
- Improving working conditions and work schedules
- Increasing the appeal for female workers
- Identifying strategic partnerships within the community to identify common themes and resources.

Collaboration between employers and trade unions can help address immediate challenges and implement sustainable solutions. By working together, the public transport sector can remain robust, efficient and inclusive, ultimately benefiting the entire community.



➤ Bus Solaris Urbino elettrico in front of Bonaria, Cagliari



## GOOD PRACTICE: CLEAN BUS EUROPE PLATFORM PROJECT

To examine how the transition to clean buses affects the workforce, a study – coordinated by UITP – was undertaken to look at clean bus deployment from a holistic perspective. This was undertaken as part of the EU initiative, the Clean Bus Europe Platform (CBEP).

Through encouraging dialogue with social partners, the CBEP is seeking to engage operators, workers' representatives and trade unions to better accompany the process of transformation to clean-fuel buses. In cooperation with the European Transport Workers Federation (ETF), the report looks at the following aspects:

- Effects on urban public bus transport: tendering, procurement and investment, operations, safety and infrastructure.
- Impacts on local economies and employment from the perspective of bus producers.
- Impacts on employment, staff, skills and needs of employees as well as emerging jobs.
- Impacts on work environment, working time as well as health and safety.
- The role of social dialogue in clean bus deployment and recommendations for easing the transition.



➤ Hermes e-Bus driver in Eindhoven (ASSURED project)



➤ Bus Solaris Urbino elettrico near Bonaria, Cagliari

## GOOD PRACTICE: FERROCARRILS DE LA GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA (FGC), SPAIN, CREATED AN 'ABSENTEEISM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE', COMPOSED OF ALL FGC BUSINESS UNITS AND UNIONS

In 2020, the FGC launched an 'Absenteeism Management Plan'. The objective was to define a management system for work absenteeism due to common illness and work-related accidents. It was decided that all people in the organisation should be engaged, committed and active in this plan, including the unions.

The Committee, which is composed of all FGC business units and unions and is coordinated by the HR department, is responsible for:

- monitoring the indicators of absenteeism
- analysing their evolution in sensitive areas
- identifying cases of serious sickness based on the various indicators
- proposing improvements and adapting the Absenteeism Management System
- drawing up the half-yearly report on the evolution of absenteeism, to be presented to the board of directors.



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This is an official Policy Brief of UITP, the International Association of Public Transport. UITP represents the interests of key players in the public transport sector. Its membership includes transport authorities, operators, both private and public, in all modes of collective passenger transport, and the industry. UITP addresses the economic, technical, organisational and management aspects of passenger transport, as well as the development of policy for mobility and public transport worldwide.

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