



NEWS RELEASE

Kitsap Transit holds open call for new bus drivers amid shortage

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Contact: Sanjay Bhatt, Kitsap Transit PIO
360-824-4926, sanjayb@kitsaptransit.com

Kitsap Transit is testing an open-call process in an effort to make it easier for job-hunters to submit applications on a rolling basis. Previously, the agency opened the recruitment window for a defined period only a few times a year. Information on open routed-operator positions is posted on Kitsap Transit's [employment site](#).

The shortage of available bus drivers, which forced today's announced revisions to bus service, results from a confluence of factors, including a large number of bus driver absences, shortage of part-time drivers willing to accept additional work, and difficulty recruiting new trainee drivers.

Kitsap Transit bus drivers receive good wages and benefits: Routed operators in training earn \$17.46 an hour, and upon successful completion of training and probation, earn \$19.81 an hour. Benefits include eligibility for a pension through the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) upon hire, holiday pay and health care benefits.

According to the Washington State Employment Security Department, Kitsap County's unemployment rate in February was 5.9 percent. Driver applicants, among other requirements, must have a clean driving record, pass a Commercial Driver's License exam and satisfy background checks.

Kitsap Transit recognizes applicants have more choices in a robust economy.

"We're competing with the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, which hires straight to full-time, 40 hours a week with full benefits," said Jeff Cartwright, Kitsap Transit's director of human resources.

On average, about 71 percent of trainees make it through probation in our Routed program. Kitsap Transit's most recent training program accepted 14 individuals, only seven of whom showed up on the first day of class. Typically, during the eight-week training program, the agency loses about one-third of trainees due to a variety of factors, such as tardiness or poor driving skill.

Because of seniority provisions in the bus-driver union contract, new drivers historically have had to start out with part-time work and part-time benefits and a work schedule with varied hours. Operators may be scheduled at North Base in the morning, Central Base in the mid-day and South Base in the afternoon.

Like all transit agencies, Kitsap Transit also faces an operational challenge as a large share of its workforce approaches retirement. About one-third of the agency's 94 routed-service operators is age 60 or older; drivers are eligible for normal retirement at age 65 with at least five years of service. Another 45 percent of routed-service operators are in their fifties.

"The industry faces a severe shortage of skilled and seasoned employees as thousands of workers from the baby-boom generation approach retirement over the next five to ten years," according to the [American Public Transit Association](#). "Other significant workforce challenges facing the public transportation industry include a generally tight labor market, an increase in technological requirements across job functions, and the growing diversity of the workforce."

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About Kitsap Transit

Kitsap Transit has been operating friendly, convenient public transit since 1983. The Bremerton-based transit agency for Kitsap County carried more than 3.8 million riders last year across a multi-modal system of routed buses, paratransit shuttles, vanpools, worker/driver buses for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and passenger-only ferry service. Learn more at www.kitsaptransit.com.