**Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – December 5, 2023**

**Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – November 21, 2023**

**Item No. 1 Enhancing the Recruitment and Retention of Transit Operators**

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and submitted the following to Council:

1. That this report be received as information.

**Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – November 21, 2023**

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Lukes,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 21, 2023, the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

David Grant submitted a communication with respect to matter:

COUNCIL DECISION:

On May 30, 2023, Council adopted the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works, which included the following:

3. That the Public Service be directed to continue to take all reasonable efforts to recruitment and retention within the Public Service, with Transit Operator recruitment and retention as a high priority, and report back to Council by December 2023 with an update on all efforts to enhance the recruitment and retention of Transit Operators.

# ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

**Title:** Transit Human Resource Update on Bus Operator Recruitment Efforts

**Critical Path:** Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – Executive Policy Committee – Council

## AUTHORIZATION

| Author | Department Head | CFO | CAO |
|---|---|---|---|
| T. Slatnik | G. Ewankiw | N/A | M. Jack |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the administrative report to provide the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works (SPC-PW) and Council with key highlights of the Transit Human Resource division's efforts related to the recruitment and retention of qualified Bus Operator candidates.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

## REASON FOR THE REPORT

At its May 30, 2023, meeting, Council directed the Public Service to continue to take all reasonable efforts to recruitment and retention within the Public Service, with Transit Operator recruitment and retention as a high priority, and report back to Council by December 2023 with an update on all efforts to enhance the recruitment and retention of Transit Operators.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications, financial or otherwise, to this report.

## HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Recruitment Process Evolution

In the past, Transit's recruitment process for bus operators was an annual endeavour that took approximately nine months to complete. The process typically attracted several hundred interested applicants vying for 25-30 open positions. In recent years, due largely to the changing needs of the department to recruit more frequently throughout the year resulting in part from an

aging workforce, service growth and a competitive labour market, streamlining took place to reduce the process timeline to approximately nine  weeks.

Due to considerable challenges being faced in the labour market, the loss of viable candidates due to the wait times between candidate assessment steps and general impacts of the pandemic, a new, more nimble approach was developed in June 2022 whereby the introduction of a one-day “Blitz” process was implemented in which all applications received  in three-week block are evaluated in one day. Typically, due to the number of applicants, the Blitz process runs over two-three days with “all hands-on deck” to determine those suitable for formal hire and acceptance into the 31-day bus operator training program. While this is taxing on the Department’s available resources, the Public Service continues this process as it has resulted in positive outcomes in recruitment despite the ongoing labour market challenges faced by transit systems, and most other industries, North America-wide. To date in 2023, Winnipeg Transit has hired a total of 118 new bus operators.

Outreach

Outreach, in various forms, have always been utilized by Winnipeg Transit to supplement its traditional recruitment efforts involving online postings via the City of Winnipeg’s website along with its external posting partner, Indeed. In the past, this supplemental outreach has included the use of local print media, radio, local career fair events, in-person presentations to secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, and partnering directly with Winnipeg-based employment agencies and Indigenous organizations.

More recently, Transit has made more concerted efforts to increase its presence in the community. By connecting with culturally-specific organizations representing the growing numbers of newcomers to Canada and through word of mouth by members of these communities, Transit has benefitted as demonstrated by the diverse representation within its workforce. These connections have also increased access to the number of in-person events and information sharing activities Transit has been able to participate in 2022 and 2023 (See Appendix A). As a result, the operations Division has partnered with Human Resources to hire a retired Operations team member on a contract basis strictly dedicated to outreach, while dedicating the majority of an Assistant Human Resources Consultant Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to these activities and the internal oversight of the Bus Operator recruitment processes. In the Fall of 2023, the Human Resources division will be partnering with the City’s Talent Acquisition group to further expand the Department’s connections and associated opportunities.

Retention Efforts

While recruitment forms a significant piece related to maintaining on-street service delivery, making concerted efforts to retain those employees already hired and trained is, at minimum, of equal importance. While management continues to work with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) at the bargaining table on an amicable agreement further enhancing Transit’s attractiveness to potential applicants, Transit has undertaken a number of other initiatives to aid in making the workplace better for those who already deliver service on its behalf.

The implementation of operator shields in the bus operator compartment within the transit fleet has assisted in providing a safer workplace for those delivering front-line service. The potential for the expansion of that program to incorporate a shield extension on buses is an initiative currently in trial. Improving the communication systems on buses is a project currently in process and will enhance the ability of Control Centre staff to provide consistent assistance and

instruction to Operators when faced with challenging or safety-related issues. The incoming security force under the direction of the programs' newly hired Community Safety Team Lead, aims to enhance the City's ability to protect the Operator workspace, while ensuring greater safety for riders.

Within Transit, there are a number of mechanisms in place to ensure employee issues are appropriately addressed and employees have outlets to raise concerns or seek assistance. Some of these include:

- Senior Labour Management Meeting involving members of Transit Senior Leadership and ATU Executive members;
- Workplace Safety and Health Committees;
- Schedules Committee where Operators may raise questions/concerns relating to routes, schedules, timing points, runs that consistently run early/late, etc.;
- Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program that immediately and acutely works with employees who have experienced a negative workplace event and require diffusing and relief from duty;
- Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).

Aging Workforce

At present, Winnipeg Transit employs approximately 1,374 staff represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). Based on varying combinations of age and service relative to pension eligibility rules, the numbers of those staff capable of retiring today and in the coming five years is as follows:

- Today – 388 or 28.2%
- 1 year – 431 or 31.4%
- 2 years – 480 or 34.9%
- 3 years – 525 or 38.2%
- 4 years – 572 or 41.6%
- 5 years – 608 or 44.3%

These figures don't take into consideration those that opt to resign and withdraw their pensions early to embark on a new path altogether. While the recent pandemic and the resulting economic conditions have inspired some to consider exercising options available to them, it has caused others to re-evaluate how they spend the remainder of their working years. Transit is seeing decisions being made that place other employment opportunities ahead of those within public transit. To date in 2023, Winnipeg Transit has lost a total of 100 bus operators to retirements, resignations and terminations.

Employment Trends

At the outset of the pandemic, organizations and industries across Canada and globally had to considerably adapt the way in which business was conducted and begin the full-scale implementation of new work practices to support the maintenance of service delivery balanced with the physical and mental well-being of their workforce. Staff began reprioritizing what was most important to them, with health, safety, and work-life balance demands tipping the employment scales in favour of the employee. Secure careers offering traditional benefits and standard pension programs began falling short in their ability to attract and retain qualified people. This has resulted in longer and more frequent recruitment cycles, diluting the workforce of dedicated talent and knowledge retention, while greatly increasing the requirement to invest added time, money, and resources in training new hires more often.

As younger generations enter the labour market, the desire to obtain long-term “careers” is no longer a motivator for many within this demographic. Frequent job changes every one to three years is becoming more the norm, with workers seeking that transient flexibility to support the lifestyle they desire. Adapting to this, will be a challenge for an extended period of time for most organizations and will require the streamlining of existing recruitment and training practices, along with greater flexibility and creativity from employers in policy development, collective agreement language negotiation, shiftwork options, and options supporting cultural needs and lifestyle choices.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

## Financial Impact Statement **Date:** October 13, 2023

# Project Name:
# Transit Human Resource Update on Bus Operator Recruitment Efforts

**COMMENTS:**

There is no financial impact as this report is for information only.

*Laurie Fisher October 13, 2023*
Laurie Fisher, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance & Administration

## CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

N/A

## OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

Goal: Environmental Resilience
Objective 2: Prioritize sustainable transportation as the mobility options of choice.
Transition to a sustainable transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people, goods and services, increases access to a variety of affordable mobility choices, encourages less reliance on personal vehicle travel, reduces travel time, mitigates congestion and related greenhouse gas emissions, and supports the development of denser, better-connected, healthy and complete communities.

## WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

This report is in accordance with the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (WCAP) as per Direction 3.1 Increase Use and Efficiency of Public Transit Systems.
Relevant actions include: Deliver continuous improvement in transit service with a focus on customer service, reliability, and route connectivity, and public education.

## WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Goal 5(b) Transportation System Equity is Enhanced - improvements to transportation and transit infrastructure and services prioritize areas of higher poverty, and increased interconnectivity to employment and affordable goods and services.

## SUBMITTED BY

Department: Transit
Division: Human Resource Services
Prepared by: Todd Slatnik, Manager of Human Resources
Date: October 13, 2023

Attachment:
Appendix A - Summary of 2022/23 Outreach Event & Organization Listing