

To: Administration & Finance Committee

Date: December 17, 2021

From: Kristina Martinez, Director of Recruitment & EE Development

Reviewed by: *WC.*

SUBJECT: Transit Operator Recruitment

Background:

Since late February 2020, staff has closely monitored the changes surrounding COVID-19 at the federal, state, and local levels. The Authority implemented a number of processes, procedures, and mitigation efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This included a temporary suspension in recruitment activities.

As the economy continues to recover from the pandemic, County Connection alongside many other transit agencies are faced with the challenges of labor uncertainties. For perspective, County Connection received 128 applications for the Transit Operator position in FY 2019, 107 applications in FY 2020, 31 applications in FY 2021, and 25 applications since the start of FY 2022. Since July 2021, the recruitment and training departments have continued to actively recruit new Operators with total of nine (9) Operator hires made to date. These hires did not increase the number of Operators, rather, kept the Authority at a net zero as normal attrition rates occurred. As County Connection moves forward, ongoing recruitment of Operators will be imperative to meeting current service needs as well as new service demands.

In order to meet these labor needs, staff recognizes the challenges of attracting new applicants and remaining competitive within the current labor market. Currently, County Connection Transit Operators are paid \$23.24/hr. upon the completion of training. This hourly rate is the first step of a five-step pay scale (Steps A-E). Transit agencies across the region show comparable or higher starting rates. Others are also currently offering alternative incentives such as sign-on bonuses.

To assist in our recruitment efforts and allow for a more competitive position, staff is proposing an increase to the starting pay for all new incoming Operators at \$26.15/hr. (Step C). This would also include a move in pay for all existing County Connection Operators currently at Step A or B. Under this new strategy, the goal is to increase the current staffing levels by approximately 5%, or seven (7) Operators and reduce the effect of overtime costs. This target is to meet the Authority's current reduced service due to COVID-19 and provide the ability to make additional hires as we continue to recover post pandemic. Since the Operator shortage is anticipated to remain over the next calendar year staff would propose maintaining this change through to the end of the existing contract which is set to expire in January 2023.

Financial Implications:

The Authority is currently budgeted for 151 Operators in FY 2022. Currently, there are 139 Operators in the Transportation department, thirteen (13) of which are currently at Step A (\$23.24/hr.) or Step B (\$24.69/hr.)

of the pay scale. Moving these Operators to Step C (\$26.15/hr.) of the pay scale would have an immediate cost of approximately \$57,000, which includes estimated taxes and the Authority's share of PERS. Additionally, by increasing the starting wage from Step A to Step C, there would be an incremental increase of approximately \$7,000 per new hire annually (roughly \$50,000 if the Authority hits its target goal of increasing the Operator group by 5%). This increase is inclusive of wages and benefits and well within the scope of the existing budget.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends increasing the starting wage for newly hired Operators to step C and increasing the wage for existing Operators at both step A and B to step C to maximize the Authorities ability to recruit new operators.

Action Requested:

Staff requests that the A&F Committee approve the starting hourly rate for incoming Transit Operators at Step C and move existing County Connection Operators who are at Step A or B to Step C for the remainder of the contract with the ATU through January 2023.

Attachments:

Transit Operator Pay Scale

Pay Scale for Operators 2007-2021

| Effective Date | 65% of E | 80% | 85% | 90% | 95% | 100% |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Training | A | B | C | D | E |
| 7/1/2007 | \$13.76 | \$16.94 | \$18.00 | \$19.05 | \$20.11 | \$21.17 |
| 1/28/2008 | \$14.18 | \$17.45 | \$18.54 | \$19.63 | \$20.72 | \$21.81 |
| 1/25/2009 | \$14.60 | \$17.97 | \$19.09 | \$20.21 | \$21.34 | \$22.46 |
| 1/24/2010 | \$15.04 | \$18.51 | \$19.67 | \$20.83 | \$21.98 | \$23.14 |
| 1/19/2014 | \$15.34 | \$18.88 | \$20.06 | \$21.24 | \$22.42 | \$23.60 |
| 1/18/2015 | \$15.65 | \$19.26 | \$20.46 | \$21.66 | \$22.87 | \$24.07 |
| 7/1/2015 | \$16.28 | \$20.03 | \$21.28 | \$22.54 | \$23.79 | \$25.04 |
| 1/15/2017 | \$16.77 | \$20.64 | \$21.93 | \$23.22 | \$24.51 | \$25.80 |
| 1/14/2018 | \$17.28 | \$21.26 | \$22.59 | \$23.92 | \$25.25 | \$26.58 |
| 10/1/2018 | \$17.80 | \$21.90 | \$23.27 | \$24.64 | \$26.01 | \$27.38 |
| 2/1/2020 | \$18.33 | \$22.56 | \$23.97 | \$25.38 | \$26.79 | \$28.20 |
| 2/1/2021 | \$18.88 | \$23.24 | \$24.69 | \$26.15 | \$27.60 | \$29.05 |