

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

GABRIELA SANTIAGO-ROMERO


COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 6

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mikel Oglesby, Director
Detroit Department of Transportation

Jay Rising, Chief Financial Officer
City of Detroit

THRU: Council Member Mary Sheffield, Council President

FROM: Council Member Gabriela Santiago-Romero 

DATE: February 17, 2023

RE: Status Update for Retention of DDOT Bus Drivers and Wage Increase

According to Transportation Riders United (TRU), in April and May of 2021, 3 in 10 Detroiters waiting on a bus were left stranded. Riders are often left in the cold or extreme heat, are forced to pay hefty Uber or Lyft expenses, and are often late for work, putting their jobs at jeopardy¹. Since they can't afford alternative transportation, some riders don't reach their destination until hours later, which adds to their poverty-related stress and causes erratic schedules². These issues are prevalent and ongoing today.

It is determined that the primary issue is a lack of bus drivers in the city of Detroit. In reference to DDOT's hiring website, their current starting wage is \$14.71/hour and \$16.81/hour after probation³. In Detroit, a living wage for a family of four is \$28/hour¹. These wages are not adequate to survive with today's economy, and despite job openings, there is not enough applicants.

¹ <https://www.detroittransit.org/ddot-in-crisis/>

² <https://www.bridgedetroit.com/detroits-buses-are-rolling-but-are-they-reliable/>

³ <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/detroit?department%5b0%5d=Dept%20of%20Transportation&&keywords=Department%20of%20Transportation>

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The Ride, Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, has enough drivers to prevent tardiness. The Ride's drivers make \$28.65/hour after training, roughly twice DDOT's wage which presents that a livable wage can streamline hiring¹.

According to a national report by TransitCenter, the bus operator shortage is a nationwide crisis, yet these issues predate the pandemic. While pay is the primary issue⁴, the job has also become more difficult. Operator assaults have increased⁴ which has also been a problem in Detroit⁵. Drivers' work-life balance suffers because of rigorous scheduling⁴. The shortage of bathrooms on routes caused numerous bus drivers' health issues⁴. Outdated break rooms are uncomfortable⁴. Due to these concerns, many potential drivers countrywide have chosen to work for other CDL businesses with better salary and conditions⁴.

With this information in mind, please respond to the following questions in writing:

1. Please provide an update on the quarterly bonuses that were provided to DDOT bus drivers regarding satisfactory and sufficiency.
 - a. What eligibility requirements are needed to allow drivers to receive the bonuses?
2. Please explain what the Department is doing to address the increase in operator assaults.
3. Please provide a report on the survey results regarding DDOT employee satisfaction.
4. Are there plans to provide bus operators with a competitive wage in upkeeping with neighboring cities?
5. Please provide a cost benefit analysis on providing DDOT drivers a wage increase to \$29/hour and provide a list of sources of where these funds can be obtained.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions. Thank you.

Cc: Honorable Detroit City Council
Louise Jones, City Clerk's Office
Malik Washington, City Council Liaison

⁴ https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Bus-Operators-in-Crisis_RGB_Interactive-1.pdf

⁵ [Detroit Bus Drivers Expose Deplorable Working Conditions: Rodents, Bed Bugs, Spitting And Assaults - CBS Detroit \(cbsnews.com\)](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/detroit-bus-drivers-expose-deplorable-working-conditions-rodents-bed-bugs-spitting-and-assaults/)