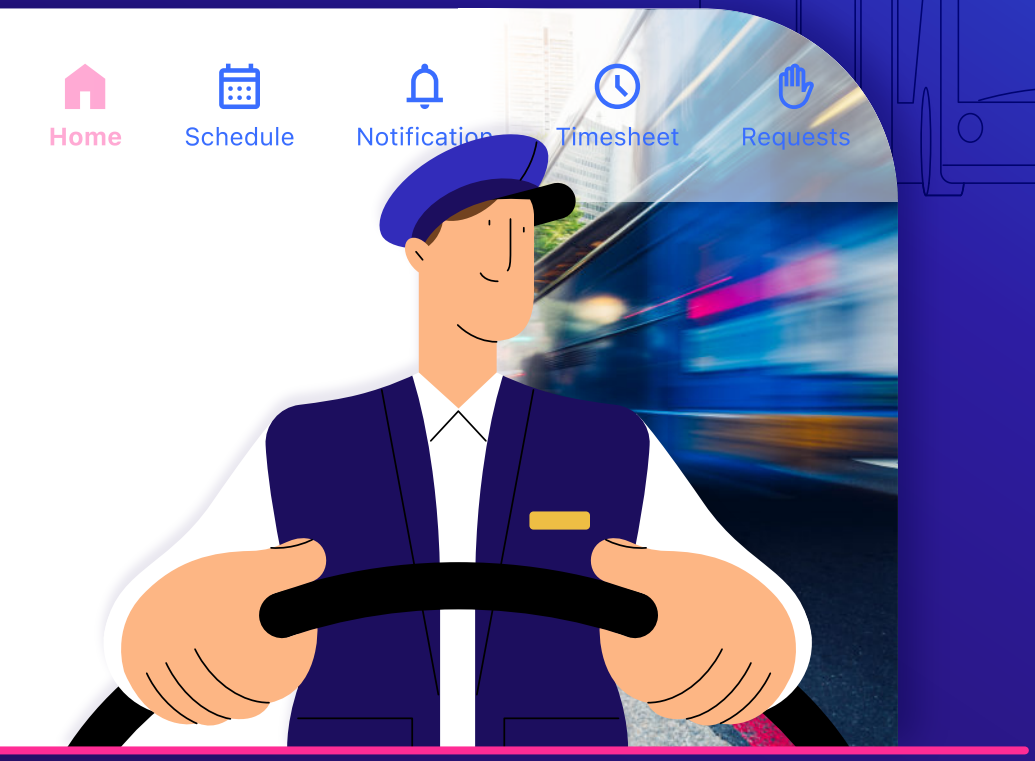
optibus



A TECHNICAL GUIDE FOR

DRIVER RETENTION

eBook

Introduction:
THE COST OF DRIVER ATTRITION

Transit agencies across North America are facing an unprecedented workforce crisis. According to the APTA Transit Workforce Shortage Summary:

96% of agencies report workforce shortages

84% state this directly affects their ability to deliver service. A third have been forced to cut service

over **70%** have delayed service expansions due to insufficient operator availability



The implications are both operational and financial. It costs agencies an average of $4,129 to fill an open driver position (TCRP Report 245), not including the 32-day training cycle.

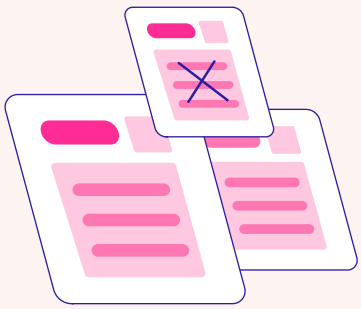
These costs are compounded by compliance risks, lawsuits, and service interruptions stemming from opaque scheduling, outdated bidding processes, and payroll disputes.

Driver retention isn't only an HR problem. It is an operations problem - **one that can be tackled through transparency, automation, and system-wide agility.**

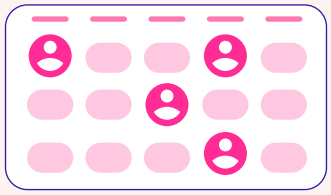
UNDERSTANDING THE WORKWEEK LIFECYCLE

Systems-Level Complexity

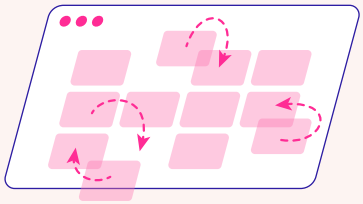
Transit workforce operations span a complex lifecycle:



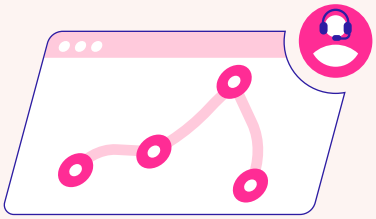
Roster creation & bidding



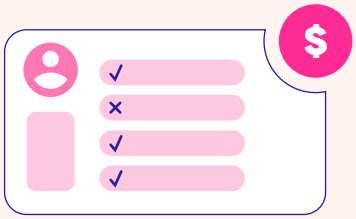
Forward allocation & weekly assignment



Absence/swap requests & communication



Live operations & real-time dispatch



Payroll calculation, validation, and export

Each stage is subject to union rules, labor regulations, and service requirements. Manual or fragmented tools often fail to keep up, leading to cascading issues: misassignments, pay disputes, uncovered trips, and labor grievances.

A robust solution must address all five stages in a unified platform. Optibus does this by connecting planners, dispatchers, and drivers with real-time data, automated validations, and a shared source of truth.

BIDDING THAT BUILDS TRUST

Limitations of Legacy and Paper Bidding

Legacy systems or paper-based workflows introduce manual overhead and opportunities for error. Drivers often lack visibility into their own options and bid statuses, creating a perception of unfairness or favoritism.

One scheduler at a mid-sized agency described the process as:

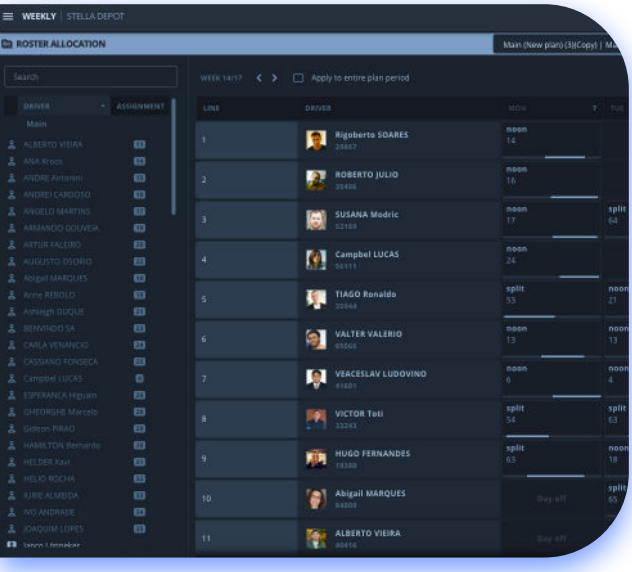
> A logistical nightmare during bid week — drivers lining up at 6 a.m., trying to understand incomplete rosters, and calling in repeatedly to double-check assignments.

This confusion not only frustrates staff but erodes driver confidence in the fairness of the process.

Optibus Roster and Hybrid Bidding

Optibus introduces digital bidding models:

- **Roster Bidding:** Prebuilt weekly packages
- **Hybrid Bidding:** Combination of weekly packages and shorter duties



Each model includes:

- Rules-based automation and eligibility filtering
- Real-time visibility into bid status
- Admin oversight and validation

This transparency improves trust and accelerates the bidding cycle. Drivers can preview available rosters and mark favorites in advance, helping them participate with more confidence. Agencies benefit from fewer disputes and grievances.

REAL-TIME DISPATCHING AND DISRUPTION MANAGEMENT

On-the-day operations demand speed and precision. Paper rosters or non-interactive dashboards cannot support the agility needed.



Dispatcher Toolset in Optibus:

- **Gantt View:** Timeline-based visualization of shifts, gaps, and events
- **Trip-Level Reassignment:** Move individual blocks or trips as needed
- **Uncovered Stack:** Live list of open duties for coverage
- **Validation Engine:** Real-time rule checks (rest time, shift limits)

Dispatchers gain situational awareness and confidence in their decisions. Instead of reacting with guesswork, they operate with full visibility and compliance safety nets.

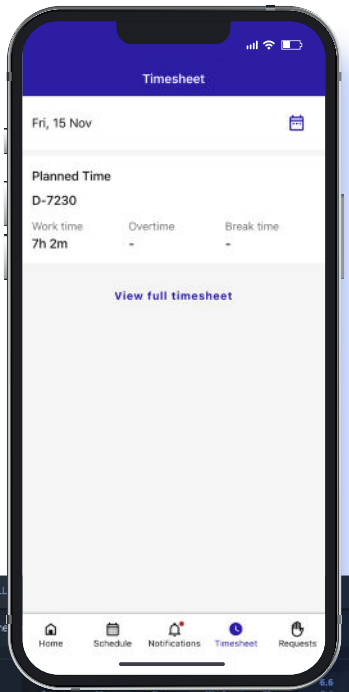


PAYROLL AND COMPLIANCE ENGINE

The Risk of Manual Payroll

70% of a transit agency's OPEX is driver wages. Yet many still rely on manual or semi-automated payroll systems. The consequences include:

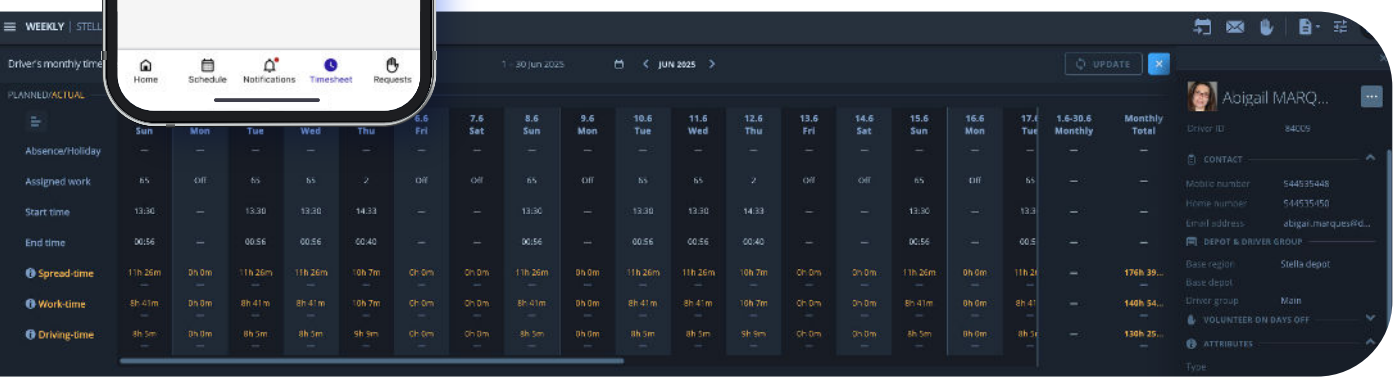
- Pay disputes that erode trust
- Audit failures
- Compliance violations with CBAs and labor law



Optibus Payroll Features

- **Rule Validation:** Applied at scheduling, bidding, and live changes
- **Timesheet Logic:** Linked to sign-on/off data
- **Audit Logs:** Structured export with full traceability
- **Driver Visibility:** Portal access to hours worked, pay breakdown

This system of record eliminates inconsistencies and creates accountability across operations and HR.



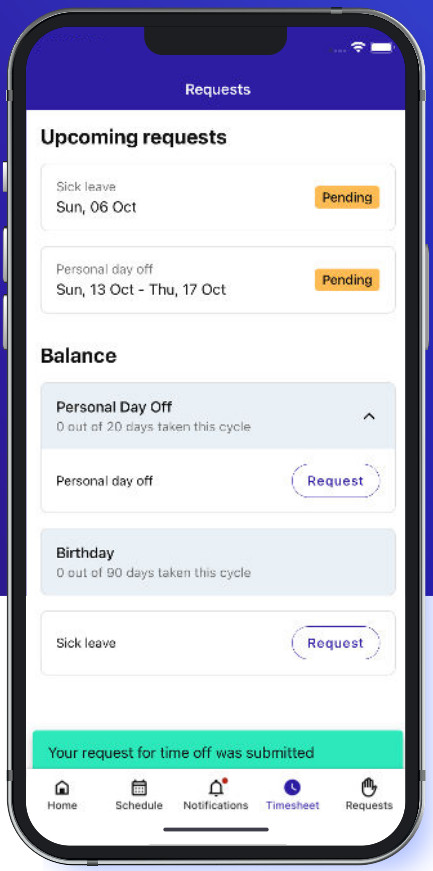
DRIVERS AS PLATFORM USERS

Drivers today expect digital tools that match the clarity and autonomy of other industries. Optibus provides multi-platform access:

- **Depot kiosk access**
- **Mobile-responsive web portal**
- **Driver App**

Portal Capabilities:

- **View schedules and bid results**
- **Submit absence and swap requests**
- **Review pay and hours**
- **Receive direct messages from dispatch or HR**



80%

Driver adoption exceeds 80% in live deployments, with notable drops in phone tag and office visits. When drivers feel informed and in control, satisfaction rises.



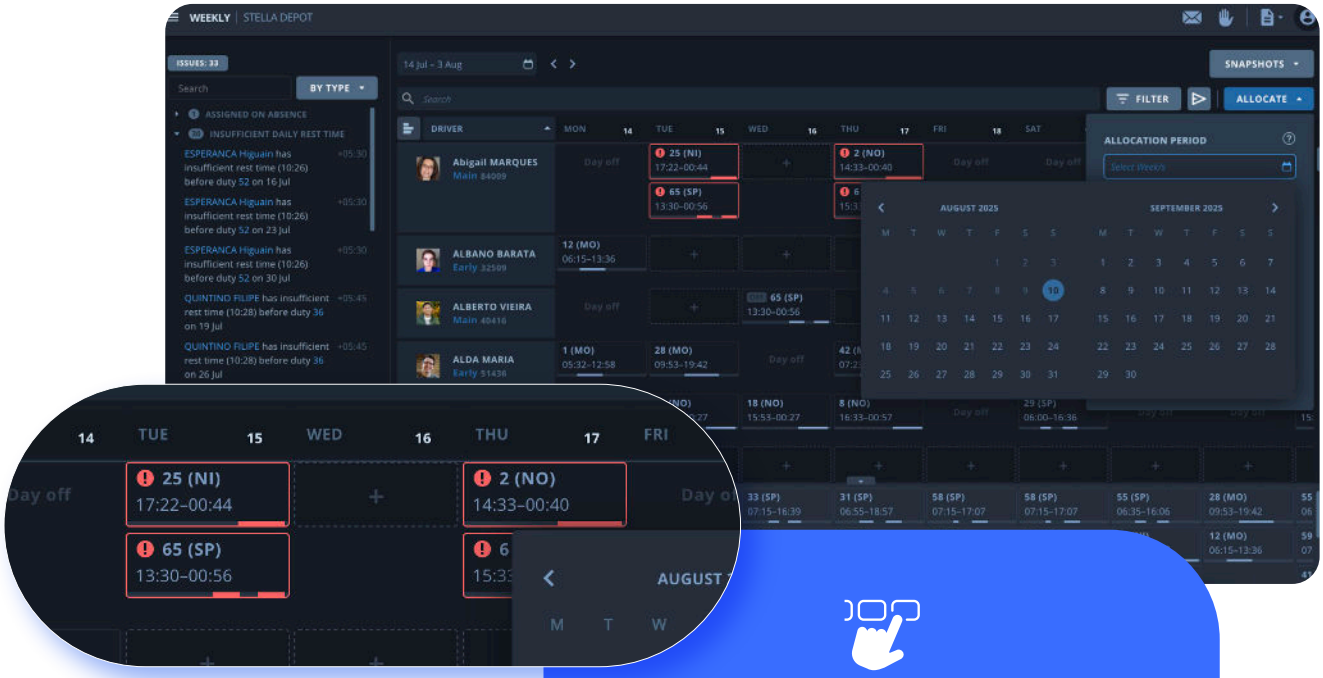
Consider a day in the life of a driver named Maria. Before her agency adopted Optibus, Maria would wait by the bulletin board or call dispatch to confirm shift details.

Now, she simply checks her phone before heading to work. She sees her assignment, her pay-to-date for the week, and a message about a minor route change. No guesswork, no delays; just clarity.

FORWARD ALLOCATION WITH CONFIDENCE

Optibus supports forward allocation across a multi-week horizon, with no hard limit; allocators can plan as far ahead as needed (e.g., up to ~3 months during an active bid cycle). The weekly view displays up to 5 weeks at once for better context.

- **Calendar-based patterns (e.g., AM/PM/Split duty logic)**
- **Preference matching and extra board balancing**
- **Visibility into unassigned duties and upcoming gaps**



Dispatchers and allocators can resolve absences, swap requests, and short-term events with clarity and confidence.

SEAMLESS INTEGRATION IN A LEGACY LANDSCAPE

Most agencies use a patchwork of CAD/AVL, payroll, and scheduling tools. **Optibus provides flexible integrations:**

CAD/AVL

Syncs real-time changes on day-of service with planned schedules

PAYROLL

Structured exports into ERP or HR systems

T&A

Reconciliation with timekeeping and attendance logs

This reduces double-entry, prevents handoff errors, and ensures all data is anchored to a single logic engine.

OPERATIONAL OUTCOMES AND KPIs

Agencies using Optibus have reported:

25%
faster disruption response time

Up to
80%
less admin time on payroll and bidding

30%
faster resolution of uncovered trips

20%
reduction in annual driver turnover

These aren't abstract benefits. They translate into more predictable service, improved labor relations, and measurable ROI.

Conclusion:

OPERATIONAL AGILITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF DRIVER RETENTION

Driver retention is a daily challenge for operations managers, planners, and dispatchers. It surfaces in every uncovered shift, every call from a frustrated driver, and every hour spent resolving disputes. While benefits packages and bonuses can help, they do not replace the need for operational consistency, transparency, and trust.

With a modern operations platform, transit teams can:

- **Empower drivers with transparent, predictable schedules**
- **Reduce administrative strain across operations, planning, and payroll**
- **Operate with real-time agility, even in disruption**

Optibus equips the operations side of the agency with the clarity, coordination, and confidence needed to build a stable workforce and deliver reliable service. It's not just about managing drivers, it's about empowering them.

BOOK A DEMO

About Optibus

Optibus is a unified software platform for public transportation planning, scheduling, rostering, operations, real-time control, and passenger information, powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and optimization algorithms. In thousands of cities worldwide, transportation agencies and operators use Optibus to maximize the positive impact of public transportation on passengers and the planet, improve operational efficiency and service quality, promote transportation equity, reduce emissions and costs, and modernize operations.

Learn more: **www.optibus.com** | Email: info@optibus.com