



51 Lowell Road  
Salem, NH 03079

September 29, 2015

Sandra Hodgkins  
Transportation Coordinator  
Timberlane Hampstead School District  
30 Greenough Road  
Plaistow, NH 03865

Dear Ms. Hodgkins,

I wanted to follow up on our conversation concerning the employment of drivers.

Unfortunately there is a driver shortage across the country. I have attached articles for your review. The current unemployment rate nationally is 5.1% and New Hampshire is 3.6%. With the unemployment rate being this low it is difficult to attract applicants.

One item that compounded the issue this summer was an unemployment law change that requires drivers to look for full time work. In the prior years our drivers were allowed to collect unemployment and not actively look for other work. This change cost First Student several drivers for school startup.

Over the summer months we had several applicants. Many would not return our calls for appointments. The applicants we were able to contact went through the interview process and when it came time to start training again they would not return our calls. Of the new trainees that started training two to three dropped out saying the position was not for them. We were able to completely train three new drivers. Unfortunately we lost two prior to school start.

First Student continues to advertise for new drivers all year long and we do not stop training. We offer competitive wages and benefits which I have listed below:

- Guaranteed five (5) hours per day.
- Wage scale up to \$16.00 per hour depending on seniority date.
- Driver Training Rate Premium of \$1.00 per hour
- Monthly Attendance and Safety Bonus of \$50.00
- Weekly Longevity Bonus of \$5.00 or every five (5) years of employment.
- Health Benefits; Company pays 70% for 0-5 years of employment and 90% for 5+ years.
- Company paid life insurance of \$25,000.
- Company matched 401k
- Six (6) paid Holidays.

First Student continues to try to attract new applicants through various advertising and promotions shown below:

- Offering of sign-on bonuses; \$2000.00 for a fully CDL applicant and \$1,000.00 for a non-CDL applicant.
- \$500.00 referral bonus for our current employees.
- Paid Training
- Advertising in local papers, school district websites, and internet media (CareerBuilder, Indeed, Etc...)
- We also pay for State testing on the weekends.
- Unemployment Office
- Job Fairs

We have also created an Applicant Tracking System (ATS). This system is nationwide and allows applicants to complete applications on line as well as schedule their own interviews.


We are currently training a Massachusetts Certified Trainer to take advantage of applicants from just over the border from Plaistow. In the past few months we have received several applications from the MA area.

The Plaistow location currently has five (5) drivers from other locations. Three (3) drivers in training of which one (1) will be going for testing. Again, five (5) Massachusetts applications.

First Student will continue to take every step possible to attract new trainees.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

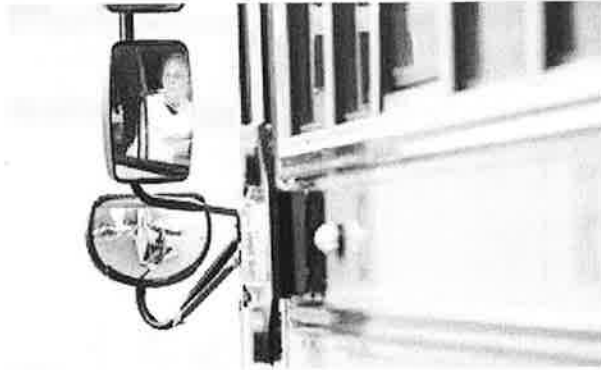
Respectfully,



Howard Anderson  
Area General Manager

# ALBANY Democrat-Herald

## Bus driver shortage affecting districts



SEPTEMBER 24, 2015 1:42 PM • JENNIFER MOODY  
ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

LaDeen Marlowe has been fighting sinus problems for four days, but she still made it to her bus route Thursday at Clover Ridge Elementary School.

The 13-year bus driver said she thought about taking a sick day, but she knows Albany's transportation department has no substitutes to spare right now.

And, she said, she loves her job — although, she joked, "Sometimes I have to go home and check in the mirror and see that I'm not bald-headed."

Albany is among school districts statewide facing a shortage of bus drivers this year, an issue affecting everything from substitutes to field trips.

Kim Crabtree, director of transportation for the Albany district and president of the Oregon Pupil Transportation Association, said the shortage issue comes up at every meeting. She said she hears about it from her colleagues in other states, too.

Monroe, Philomath and Sweet Home say they're not experiencing any particular problems, but Corvallis and Lebanon joined Albany in saying they've noticed the shortage.

Corvallis has had to combine some routes and is experiencing some crowding, said Brenda Downum-VanDevelder, the district's spokeswoman.

The district called Albany on the first day of school to see if Crabtree had an extra driver available for a field trip. Crabtree didn't.

Maggie Estes, who oversees buses for the Lebanon Community School District, said she has her routes covered but no one to spare.

"I actually got a call from a Springfield school a couple of weeks ago asking if we had a driver for one of their sports trips," Estes said, adding that she had to turn it down. "It's a struggle, for sure."

Crabtree said she thinks the problem comes from a strengthening economy combined with a statewide shift to all-day kindergarten.

Most bus driver jobs are part-time anyway, and the elimination of midday routes cut the available hours.

Albany has found midday work for some of the displaced bus drivers in janitorial and food services to help them keep their hours up, Crabtree said. "The union and the school district are very supportive in helping me keep these drivers."

Regular routes are covered for now, Crabtree said, but the transportation department has asked schools to help by scheduling field trips only between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. to keep school route time free.

That posed a problem for Josefine Fleetwood, the workforce development coordinator for the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce. She's organizing Manufacturing Day on Oct. 2, an opportunity for Linn and Benton county high school students to tour local industries, and had hoped to start at 8 that morning.

"This is a big problem and will affect student's participation in many enriching opportunities," Fleetwood said. "This needs to be addressed and drivers need to be recruited."

Crabtree said she's managing to cobble together a solution for the tour. The students will have to take just two buses instead of the three originally requested, but the original start time is still in effect.

"I'm just making it work," Crabtree said. "I'm having drivers in between middle school, high school and elementary who have a few extra minutes to run them over there."

More drivers would be nice, she acknowledged, but she said the situation is a little more complicated than simply going on a recruiting drive.

First, qualified applicants are in short supply. Second, even qualified people aren't necessarily interested in sticking around, Crabtree said. "Not everyone wants 84 kids behind them driving down the road."

Also, Crabtree said, she's limited to the number of buses she has on hand no matter how many drivers she has — and sometimes, especially with schedules set by the Oregon School Activities Association, they're already spoken for. Sports events almost always run into afternoon route times, she said.

"It's a problem," she said. "It's always been a problem. It's just more of a problem now than it has been in past years."



## School bus driver shortage hits Hunterdon

New York City School Bus Drivers On Verge Of Strike

A reported bus driver shortage is now affecting at least one school in Hunterdon County. *(Mario Tama/Getty Images)*

**Emily Cummins | For NJ.com** By **Emily Cummins | For NJ.com**

**Email the author | Follow on Twitter**

on August 26, 2015 at 4:26 PM, updated September 01, 2015 at 4:33 PM

**READINGTON TWP.**— School starts this week in Hunterdon County, and already there are a few bumps in the road.

Coinciding with federal testing changes for school bus drivers, a reported **shortage in drivers** is affecting schools including at least one district in Hunterdon County.

Readington Township School District, which does not use an outside company for its busing, is down three drivers and has had to make-do with the staff they have in its transportation department, Business Administrator Steffi-Jo DeCasas reported at the August school board meeting.

While bus driver shortages aren't uncommon, according to a recent report by **NJ.com**, recent testing changes "exacerbated the problem of getting qualified drivers."

Companies that provide drivers for school district are short as many as 10 employees at the start of the school year, and waiting on commercial driver's license testing scheduled for applicants as late as December.

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"Motor Vehicle has changed the way they test in order to meet the federal requirements," Ray Kuehner, president of the School Transportation Supervisors of New Jersey told **NJ.com in August**. "The problem is that the change was made without any advance notice to districts or bus contractors..."

Drivers must demonstrate maneuvers such as parallel parking and pop the hood to identify key elements in the engine compartment, along with many other tasks under new federal requirements put in place July 8, and ultimately these new elements have resulted in more test failures, according to NJ.com's previous report.

For Readington Township School District, the problem is not a large one and DeCasas said the district is providing busing to all students who need it, but its uncertain what other districts if any are affected by the shortage.

**First Student Inc.** which provides student bus transportation in the state did not immediately respond to a request for comment but is seeking part-time drivers for Hunterdon and Warren counties according to its website.

Additionally, Delaware Valley High School, South Hunterdon Regional High School, North Hunterdon Voorhees School District, NORWESCAP Head Start and Child Time Learning Center are all currently hiring part-time, full-time or substitute bus drivers.

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## MISD bus driver shortage worse than before

By Tessa Duvall | [tduvall@mrt.com](mailto:tduvall@mrt.com) | Posted: Tuesday, April 29, 2014 9:00 pm

Midland ISD's ongoing school bus driver shortage is the worst it has been in years.

Director of Transportation Services Willie A. Tarleton said the district is currently operating with 55 to 58 drivers fewer than it would like to employ.

"It's the last six years," Tarleton said. "It just didn't start overnight that we have been fighting the shortage here with our good economy in our community."

Tarleton estimated the district was short 15 to 20 drivers short four or five years ago, and the number has grown every year since. Last school year the shortage peaked at 40 drivers short, he said, adding he thought that was as bad as it could get.

With the continuing shortage, MISD is considering eliminating transportation for Head Start students, although the decision has yet to be finalized. Federal Head Start regulations do not require programs to provide transportation.

About 32 students ride MISD buses to get to and from their Head Start campuses, according to Director of Early Childhood Education Pat Lyons. Transporting those students requires seven buses, she said.

Tarleton said the need for drivers grows as the school year progresses.

"We can start pretty close on an even playing field when school starts, but then after school starts ... and as our economy is continuing to improve, we start really going backward," he said.

A lack of bus drivers is not isolated to Midland, he said, adding that districts nationwide are operating with fewer-than-desired drivers, although not at the same level as MISD.

Superintendent Ryder Warren said the transit department is the most stressed in the district.

"We have bus drivers who are driving triple the length of routes than they ever have before because we've had to double and triple our routes because of drivers," he said.

The "chronic" shortage of drivers may not have an easy solution, he said.



### MISD school buses

In this file photo, MISD school buses are parked in front of Lee High School. Photo by Tim Fischer/Midland Reporter-Telegram