



**Transportation Department Safety & Training
Unit 12: Public and Community Relations**

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Objectives

1. To explain the importance of community relations
2. To help understand how this position affects the educational community

Introduction

As a professional bus driver, driving a vehicle safely is not enough. A driver must also possess the necessary skills to work with customers. You will work with the general public, young people, parents, teachers, and school administrators.

A driver must also understand and accept the fact that as public employees, he or she must maintain work standards that are acceptable to everyone with, and for, whom we work.

Confidence in our abilities and respect from pupils, the general public, parents, teachers, administrators, fellow workers, and other members of the community must be earned.

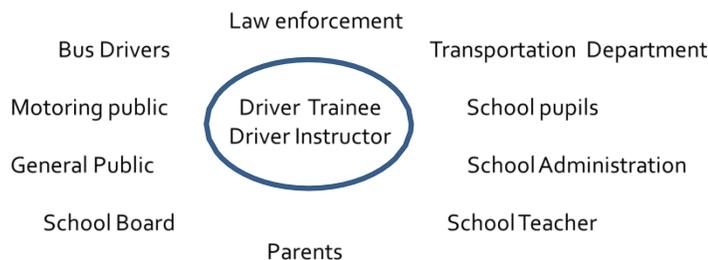
Practically everything done while performing the job and the manner in which you conduct yourself while performing it, will contribute either favorably or unfavorably to the community's image of you and the transportation system.

Unit 12 is about improving the relations of the transportation system with the general public.

Questions to Consider

1. Does our profession have a negative attitude toward the customers we serve?
2. Does the general public have a negative attitude towards our industry?
3. Why?
4. How many people does a bus driver contact on a daily basis?

How Many Contacts Daily?



Creating a Good Public Opinion

Use the acronym:

I - **I**
M - **Maintain**
A - **Actions**
G - **Good (for)**
E - **Everyone**

A courteous, careful driver makes positive impressions.

The Driver and Public Relations

A driver who is careless and thoughtless creates negative impressions. For example, a driver who weaves in and out of traffic attracts unfavorable attention and unfavorable comments. One discourteous, irresponsible act helps create an unfavorable image for all members of the transportation system. Each driver is important in the public relations picture. Consider these facts:

1. As a driver, you represent your employer.
2. An unusual or out of the ordinary act by a driver can strongly affect public opinion.
3. In the course of a daily route, you have more contact with the public than any other group has because:
 1. Large numbers of people ride the buses
 2. Large numbers of motorists and pedestrians see the buses in operations

Observers expect proficient driving, take good performance for granted, and are usually quick to complain of poor performance.

Meaning of Public Relations

The term “public relations” suggests good relations with the public. However, good public relations within an organization are also essential. In many cases, good public relations are dependent of good relations within an organization. How well you get along with fellow drivers, administrations, and governing board members can affect the public’s view of the entire system.

Driver Attitude

Let’s take a closer look at the role of the driver and the transportation system in building good public relations. The attitude exhibited by a driver, professional grooming habits and the care given the equipment are all factors that make the driver a key person with respect to good public relations.

Consider the following:

1. A driver’s attitude toward the passengers helps to determine whether the public has a good or bad impression of the employer.

2. A driver's personal grooming habits are important because often first impressions are based on a person's appearance.
3. A clean, well maintained bus is a sign the driver takes pride in his or her work.
4. The driver's overall reputation in the community affects the public's confidence in him or her and therefore in the transportation system.
5. The primary responsibility is to establish and maintain a working relationship with fellow employees and district personnel. A spirit of unity and proficiency should develop, this will not just happen. The driver must make it work.
6. A driver should exercise the following good manners:
 - a. Courtesy and kindness
 - b. Recognize needs of others
 - c. Give benefit of the doubt
7. Compete with yourself, not with others.
 - a. Be a team player rather than a loner.
8. Learn to communicate effectively.
 - a. Use facial expressions (nonverbal)
 - b. Use voice inflection.
 - c. Be a good listener.
 - d. Cope with feelings
 - e. Express thoughts with clarity.

Remember, you are the professional – become a good one by doing the utmost to encourage a close working relationship within the district. Also, be aware that non-verbal communication (body language, actions, appearance, etc....) equals about **55%** of the message, **38%** tone of voice, and **7%** of the communication is in the form of words. When verbal and nonverbal do not agree, we tend to believe the nonverbal.

Passenger Feelings

How Passengers feel toward the system depends a great deal on how the drivers perform as a team in getting passengers to and from destinations. Never forget the passengers' families are paying for this service as taxpayers and expect to see that tax dollars are used in a proper way. Passengers travel the same roads as we do; and if they see something they dislike, they will be quick to file a complaint. What the public likes to see is the buses clean and operating in a professional way by courteous drivers.

Passengers make quick decisions about drivers from the ride received. They appreciate a good, smooth ride and will be quick to make favorable comments about the driver. A poor performance will quickly bring unfavorable remarks that will probably be distorted when repeated throughout the community. This does not help with public relations.

Always remember, the bus is a traveling advertisement or billboard, for the school district. The name of the school district is on the outside of the bus and seen by all. Any sudden, unexpected or illegal movement will be observed by someone, sometime, somewhere. This will usually result in a very negative opinion by the general public. This uncalled-for movement directly reflects on the bus driver, the employer, and the entire transportation industry.

You as a driver can prevent this from happening!

Community Relations

There are many opportunities for a transportation department to participate in community activities which in turn will leave a very positive feeling among the residents and a sense of pride in what is being done by the department for the community. There are many opportunities for a transportation department to participate in community activities which in turn will leave a very positive feeling among the residents and a sense of pride in what is being done by the department for the community.

It is extremely important that on any occasion in which the transportation department is involved, the drivers must be well-groomed and the buses must be clean, inside and out. The participants should be enthusiastic and have pride in what they are doing.

Public and Community Relations

You are the only representative of the bus company that most passengers see! You not only driver the bus, you also:

1. Welcome the passengers on board
2. Check student names and destinations
3. Answer any questions
4. Make sure the ride is comfortable and safe
5. Handle any passenger problem encountered

Company Benefits

The way passengers are treated by you will help them decide whether or not to continue to ride the bus.

1. If given a choice, passengers will not ride with a reckless driver.
2. Passengers will not ride with a rude or indifferent driver.

Passenger Benefits

Transportation is one of the most important needs people have. The practice of good passenger relations ensures passengers of safe, comfortable, and reliable transportation.

Attitude is Showing

The driver's appearance, gestures, posture, actions, and speech all reveal attitude. Each of these must always be professional to win and keep passenger's respect. Always remember, respect is not granted to a person; it is **earned**.

It is very hard to hide attitude. Many things provide clues to others about your attitude:

1. Appearance
2. Speech
3. Body Language

4. Behavior

If you look unkempt, speak rudely, slump in the driver's seat, and do not give any assistance to passengers, they will presume and rightly so, that you have a poor attitude toward your job and yourself.

But...If you look neat, speak politely, sit erectly in the correct driving position, look professional, and offer any assistance as needed, it will be presumed that you have a good attitude and take pride in the job and yourself.

Special People – Special Needs

The passenger relations skills you use with you passengers also apply to disabled passengers. Many disabled passengers simply cannot ride the bus without the driver assisting them. This is a real test of your passenger relations skills.

Here are some guidelines to follow:

1. Be on the lookout for disabled passengers
2. Check your mirrors for disabled passengers moving near your bus
3. Do not pull away from the bus stop until they are safely seated and any special equipment is properly secured
4. Position the bus so as to assist the disabled person to get on or off the bus safely
5. Make a special effort to avoid obstacles or dangerous ground areas in the vicinity of the bus stop

Be Courteous and Patient

1. Follow the golden rule. Respect the pride and dignity of disabled passengers
2. Speak clearly and look at hearing impaired passengers so they can read your lips and facial expressions.
3. Call out stops for visually impaired passengers
4. Give assistance, when necessary, but do not draw extra attention to the disabled passengers
5. Answer questions and give directions more clearly and, perhaps, slower for disabled passengers.

Many disabled passengers cannot ride the bus and therefor get to school unless you, the bus driver, give assistance. In no other case are your passenger relations skills more important.

Unit 12 Quiz

1. How you conduct yourself on the job will have no bearing on the community's image of you.

T_____F_____

2. A driver who is careless and thoughtless creates harmful impressions.

T_____F_____

3. Citizens expect proficient driving and are quick to complain of poor performance.

T_____F_____

4. Good public relations are not dependent on good relations within an organization.

T_____F_____

5. A driver's attitude will have no effect on the public attitude toward the carrier.

T_____F_____

6. People make quick decisions about other people on the basis of their appearance.

T_____F_____

7. Passengers expect and should have a good, smooth ride and will be quick to make comments about the driver.

T_____F_____

8. Any sudden, unexpected, or illegal movement by the bus driver will usually result in a very negative opinion by the general public.

T_____F_____

9. Participation by transportation departments in community activities could create a positive feeling among the residents of the community.

T_____F_____

10. The public is not too concerned about the condition or appearance of the buses.

T_____F_____