



Agenda Item No. (3)

To: Rules, Policy and Industrial Relations Committee/Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 24, 2022

From: Kellee J. Hopper, Deputy General Manager, Administration and Development
Denis J. Mulligan, General Manager

Subject: **APPROVE ACTIONS RELATIVE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EMPLOYMENT RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

Recommendation

The Rules, Policy and Industrial Relations Committee recommends the Board of Directors approve the following actions, effective through September 30, 2023, relative to a pilot employment recruitment program to assist the District in filling vacant positions:

1. Approve a signing bonus for all regular, full-time positions;
2. Approve the implementation of a signing bonus program for bus operator apprentices;
3. Approve an employee referral program; and,
4. Update applicable District policies accordingly,

with the understanding that the cost of the positions authorized as part of this item will be funded with salary savings and that, should staff recommend continuance of these programs beyond September 30, 2023, the matter will be brought before the Board of Directors again for consideration and possible action.

This matter will be presented to the Board of Directors at its March 25, 2022 meeting for appropriate action.

Background

Given the boom in the job market over the last several years, the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (District) has found it increasingly difficult to attract robust pools of candidates for many positions. Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, staff is seeing that receipt of candidate applications significantly diminish even more across virtually every job classification at the District, including patrol officer, engineering, finance, information systems, and bus operator job classifications.

Staff has attempted to be innovative in developing potential solutions to address the changing job market. In September 2019, the Board of Directors (Board) approved the expansion of an apprentice program job classifications, as well as the implementation of a comprehensive

professional development program. This Board action included implementing a pre-apprentice and expanded apprentice program for mechanics in the Bus Maintenance Department, and the implementation of a comprehensive professional development program, involving the creation of an internship and professional development track for several classifications. Staff was ready to launch the program but the pandemic impacted the ability to fully do so. However, the program is currently being offered to hiring managers as potential solutions to hiring difficulties within the approved classifications. Further, the Board approved a sign-on incentive of \$500 for new hires if the position had been deemed as a hard-to-fill classification.

In a recent informal poll of several other transit agencies, including some of those in the Bay Area, it reported that many are now offering significant hiring bonuses to attract potential candidates. While some of them only focused on specified classifications, many have enacted a program for all classifications within their organization.

Employment Recruitment Program Pilot

In efforts to be competitive with other agencies in the market, staff is recommending a pilot program to be in effect through September 30, 2023 (approximately 18 months) that includes: a signing incentive for all new regular, full-time hires; a signing incentive for bus operator apprentices; and an incentive for employee referrals.

For any job classification that is represented, staff will engage in the meet and confer process with the applicable bargaining unit prior to implementation.

Signing Incentive Eligibility Components

- All full-time regular new hires will be eligible for the signing incentive. Temporary, apprentices (except bus operator apprentices as noted below), part-time, casual or provisional employees are not eligible for the signing incentive.
- Participants would be subject to all District policies and procedures.
- Participants must have satisfactory job performance.
- Amount of Signing Incentive:
 - Bus Operators: \$1,000 upon conclusion of bus operator training; \$1,000 on one-year anniversary of District employment
 - All Other Job Classifications: \$1,000 upon conclusion of probation period; \$1,000 on one-year anniversary of District employment

Bus Operator Apprentice Program

In coordination with the California Labor Federation (CLF), California Transit Works (CTW) and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1575, the District now has an expanded Bus Operator Training Program that offers an Apprenticeship Program that is recognized by the Federal Department of Labor. Staff has received a California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) grant with the College of Marin (COM) to expand the program even further to allow future bus operator trainees/apprentices to earn college credit while completing the apprenticeship program.

Under this program, bus operator trainees will be concurrently enrolled as COM students earning college credit beginning in the fall of 2022. The COM will create college classes that mirror the

current training curriculum. GGT will leverage the strong ties the COM has with community-based organizations (CBOs), especially those who support priority populations, and work with them to identify talent and recruit future bus operators.

Bus Operator Pre-Apprenticeship Program: Recognizing the critical need to recruit and hire more operators for growing service levels over time, staff also established a partnership with the Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) as part of another CAI grant to establish a pre-apprenticeship program. This program will assist bus operator candidates complete the GGT application and testing processes, as well as access additional training on soft skills and customer service. This will help build a larger pool of qualified candidates. This program offers candidates, interested in becoming GGT bus operators, an opportunity to receive free college classes over the period of a semester that will help them strengthen their soft skills, verbal and written communication abilities, and understanding of professional standards and expectations in a customer-oriented environment.

While neither of these apprentice programs compensate candidates for being enrolled in the program, staff is recommending that candidates accepted into the program receive \$500 upon entry of the program, and another \$500 upon successful completion of the program. These incentives may be attractive in recruiting candidates and may help offset other college expenses during the apprentice period.

Employee Referral Incentive

It is further recommended that a \$500 referral incentive be provided to any regular employee who refers a candidate who is hired by the District as a regular, full-time employee. Payment of the referral incentive would occur after the recommended new hire reaches their one-year service anniversary with the District. A process will be put into place where an employee will notify Human Resources during the candidate's application stage, in order for the District to track, verify compliance with District policy (e.g., nepotism policy) and appropriately provide the incentive, if appropriate.

Fiscal Impact

The net estimated annual salary cost for this recommendation will depend on a number of factors, principally the number of people hired under this pilot program, which stage they are in their service time at the District, and the number of employees who are eligible for the referral incentive. For the initial launch of this program, staff estimates that Year One of the program would include approximately 50 new hires with a third referred by District employees. Given that assumption, the first year salary cost and potentially committed payments would be an estimated \$110,000. At the conclusion of the pilot, should staff determine it to be a successful tool, the matter will be brought before the Board of Directors for action. At that time, any ongoing participation in subsequent years will be funded through the annual budget process.

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