

**Standard Operating
Procedures
For
Terminal Dispatch
Suburban Mobility Authority for
Regional Transportation**



Last Updated: May 2025

1 INTRODUCTION

This manual describes the duties of the Terminal Dispatch team and their reporting relationships, explains what is expected of staff each day, and guides staff in handling a range of circumstances they may encounter. This introductory chapter provides general guidance on the organization of Bus Operations, Service Delivery, and other relevant departments, lists and defines common terminology, and offers commonly used contact information for the Authority.

1.1 AGENCY TITLES AND GROUPS

The following titles and groups and definitions correspond to titles within SMART.

Position	Group	Role
Bus Operations (VP)	Bus Operations	Responsible for all fixed-route bus operations.
Bus Operations, AVP	Bus Operations (1 per terminal)	Responsible for the day-to-day operations of the terminal (leads each terminal management team)
Bus Operations (Mgr.)	Bus Operations (1 per terminal)	Reports to AVP bus operations in each terminal (supports each terminal management team)
Terminal Dispatcher	Bus Operations (1 per terminal)	Responsible for coordinating bus schedules, assigning drivers to routes, and ensuring that buses depart and arrive on time
Bus Operator	Bus Operations	Drives a bus carrying paying passengers
Service Delivery (AVP)	Service Delivery/Bus Operations	Tracks and monitors performance of service. Identifies areas for improvement and implement changes as needed; reports to VP Bus Operations.
Central Dispatch	Service Delivery/Bus Operations	First point of contact for bus drivers while on the road. Handles breakdowns, accidents, problem passengers, detours.
Road Supervisor	Service Delivery/Bus Operations	The eyes and ears of the organization handling everything that happens on the road with drivers or other SMART employees.
Maintenance (VP)	Maintenance	Oversees all system maintenance and facilities

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Position	Group	Role
Maintenance Operations (AVP)	Maintenance (1 per terminal)	Oversees maintenance at each terminal
Facilities (Mgr.)	Maintenance	Oversees all SMART facilities
Paratransit & Demand-Response Services (VP)	Paratransit & Demand-Response Services	Oversees all Paratransit and SMARTFlex services
Dispatcher/Inspector (D/I) Supervisor	Paratransit & Demand-Response Services	Manages same-day service issues for paratransit drivers (Connector)
Capital Projects (Mgr)	Capital Projects	
Civil Rights (Mgr.)	EEO & Strategic Planning	
External Affairs (VP)	External Affairs/Marketing Communications	
Finance (CFO)	Finance/Payroll/AP/AR/Budget	
General Counsel (VP)	General Counsel	
Claims Mgr. (& AGC)	General Counsel	
Labor & Employee Relations (Mgr.)	HR & Workforce	
HR & Workforce (VP)	HR & Workforce	
Scheduling, Innovation and Planning(VP)	Planning & Innovation	Responsible for planning, analyzing productivity, identifying area for time saving and ensuing deadlines are met
Procurement (VP)	Procurement	
Risk/Safety (AVP)	Safety, Risk Management, & Training	
Safety, Risk Management, & Training (VP)	Safety, Risk Management, & Training	
InformationTechnology Services (VP)	Technology Services	

1.2 DEFINITIONS

The following abbreviations and terms are used throughout this manual.

Item	Definition
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ASU	SMART's insurance carrier
Bus Operations, AVP Bus Operations	AVP Bus Operations is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the terminal

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Item	Definition
Bus Operator	A bus operator drives a bus carrying paying passengers
Central Dispatch	First point of contact for bus drivers while on the road. (handles breakdowns, accidents, problem passengers, detours)
Clever Device	Designs innovative technology solutions for all modes of transportation
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
Dispatcher/Inspector (D/I) Supervisor	Dispatchers for Connector (paratransit) who manage day of service for Connector drivers
DOT	Department of Transportation
EA	Emergency alarm
General Counsel (Legal)	Advises the authority of their rights and obligations under the law and navigate legal issues effectively.
PRTT	Priority request to talk
Road Supervisor	The eyes and ears of the organization handling everything that happens on the road with the drivers or SMART employees
RTT	Request to talk
Run Guide	Reference tool to help drivers navigate their routes effectively.
Scheduling	Group within Planning that analyzes bus productivity and on-time performance and produces quarterly schedules for run picks
Service Delivery AVP/Bus Operations	Tracks and monitors the performance of service, identifies areas for improvement, and implements changes as needed.
Short-run bus	Bus that curtails route before completion
Support vehicle	Vehicle used by the replacement bus operator to meet in-service operator for change-off or by admin staff
Terminal Dispatch Supervisor	Responsible for coordinating bus operator schedules, assigning drivers to routes and ensuring that buses depart garage on time
Terminal Management Team	Works closely with the VP of Bus Operations on the day-to-day duties/responsibilities of the terminal
Timepoint	Points along route tied to schedule

1.3 EMAIL DISTRIBUTION LISTS

- [Central Dispatch]@smartbus.org: central dispatchers and AVP of Service Delivery
- [Oakland@smartbus.org]: road supervisors, terminal manger(?), and AVP of Service Delivery

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- [Macomb@smartbus.org]: road supervisors, terminal manger(?), and AVP of Service Delivery
- [Wayne@smartbus.org]: road supervisors, terminal manger(?), and AVP of Service Delivery
- [BusOperations@smartbus.org]: VP Bus Operations, AVP of Service Delivery, terminal managers
- [help@smartbus.org]: generates a system ticket for IT-related matters
- [ConnectorDispatch@smartbus.org]

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 FUNCTION

The function of dispatch within a transit environment is to serve as the control center of operations to ensure the availability of consistent transit service on the street each day, without which there would be no consistent transit service on the street each day. Terminal dispatchers have the responsibility to ensure that there is sufficient labor and equipment to meet the day's scheduled service.

Terminal dispatch can be a fast paced, fast moving, and multifaceted function wherein each day presents new challenges from the previous day. How individual dispatch offices are structured to function is determined by historical influences, longevity of personnel, the management philosophy of operations managers, and in some cases, collective bargaining agreements.

Terminal dispatchers are the first line of supervision. Their duties require sound judgment, knowledge, skill, and discretion. The essence is quality control, through observing the operations, correcting deficiencies, and reporting conditions of service and actions taken to the proper authorities. Effective supervision results from good communication skills, a thorough knowledge and understanding of policies and procedures, and a willingness to understand the problems confronting employees.

2.2 STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Terminal dispatchers' main responsibilities are to:

- Manage general communications
- Manage communications with Central Dispatch and Terminal Managers
- Manage communications with Bus Operators
- Ensure run coverage
- Document ongoing activities

For specific duties by time of day, refer to daily duties by shift below.

2.3 MANAGE GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Also see Terminal Dispatch Daily Duties.

General communications involve the following:

- Read and respond to emails
- Log and store lost & found items (see Appendix A)

2.4 MANAGE COMMUNICATIONS WITH CENTRAL DISPATCH AND TERMINAL TEAM

Also see Terminal Dispatch Daily Duties.

Communications with Central Dispatch and with the terminal team are via both telephone and email and include:

- Communicating with Connector Dispatch
- Communicating with Central Dispatch
- Communicating with terminal managers
- Communicating with terminal maintenance

2.5 MANAGE COMMUNICATIONS WITH BUS OPERATORS

The primary role of the terminal dispatcher is to facilitate communications with bus operators, which is paper, face-to-face, and via bulletin board postings. Tasks include tracking, marking up sign-ups for the supplementary board and volunteer sign-ups, keeping boards current, and sharing other company documents, including job openings. Specific responsibilities include:

- Mark up the boards/post the boards/load the work
- Assemble and distribute schedule cards, transfers and other related forms.
- Post weekly supplementary day-off volunteer sign-up sheets on Monday morning
- Take weekly supplementary day-off volunteer sign-up sheets down on Thursday
- Post daily supplementary volunteer boards on Monday

- Take daily supplementary volunteer boards down daily
- Post and distribute company documents
- Post and distribute reroutes/bulletins/memos
- Distribute AVP/Manager of Bus Operations notices (violations, other communications)
- Post job openings on bulletin board
- Relay messages to operators from managers
- Distribute paychecks

Also see Terminal Dispatch Daily Duties.

2.6 ENSURE RUN COVERAGE

Also see Terminal Dispatch Daily Duties and refer to excerpts from labor agreements (Appendix B).

- Plan, assign, and review the work of bus operators to assure compliance with departmental rules/regulations.
- Assign bus operators according to labor collective bargaining unit/ departmental rules, regulations and procedures; calculate personnel needs based on level of service required, and availability of equipment and personnel.
- Assure the availability of operators and equipment for posting work assignments.
- Before giving out work, double-check for correct assignments.
- Assign all regular runs to bus operators.
- Conduct run pick/vacation pick
- Plan upcoming run coverage (next pullout and beyond)
- Compile and record leave requests submitted by operators
- Assure adequate supply of all transit operations compliance
- Maintain operator attendance records.
- Check operators reporting for duty on uniform regulation compliance.
- Track call-offs; confirm if within these allowed limits:
 - 60 minutes prior to scheduled reporting time if before 11 a.m.
 - 60 minutes prior to scheduled reporting time if reporting after 11 a.m.
- Record information on AM/PM pullout sheets
- Enter information and monitor Trapeze OPS
- Collect exception cards from operators/confirm pay and transmit to payroll

2.6.1 Managing Leave Requests

See Request for Leave Form (Appendix c).

- Request for union business/company business must be submitted to management for approval.
- Once approved-be sure to record Ops
- Submit all requests to payroll
- Operators wishing to pay themselves for calling off FMLA over the weekend must submit a pay request no later than 10 a.m. Monday morning.

2.7 TERMINAL DISPATCH DAILY DUTIES

The following are the daily duties of the terminal dispatcher and vary by shift. Note that daily duties are subject to change

2.7.1 3 AM Shift Duties

2.7.1.1 Shift Start

- Check with the 8 p.m. dispatcher for shift review.
- Log into OPS and Outlook.
- Read emails/respond if needed. (Be sure to print out any corrections sent from payroll, detours, bulletins, etc.)

2.7.1.2 AM Pullout

- Use AM/PM pullout sheet/garage map/copy of run guides and daily board sheet (if needed)
- Record all call-offs on daily board sheet/and in OPS
- Record bus # on mileage sheet
- Distribute violations and complaints to AM operators/make copies/return original to terminal manager.
- Communicate with Connector Dispatch (also known as DEIs) about open runs, call-offs, bus issues and concerns.
- Monitor runs in OPS (any work not covered must be cut...be sure to identify these cuts to Central Dispatch immediately!)
- Email "list of cuts" to name@smartbus.com.

- Communicate with payroll about any issues regarding corrections and or paperwork
- Complete all exception cards/connector pay sheets/RFLs/boards/MCT/FML pay by 9:00 am (from previous day)
- Process any corrections received by payroll & return in a timely manner.
- Review & monitor supplementary boards daily...list work that requires coverage & remove any work that do not-to prevent board error!

2.7.1.3 10 AM Shift Transition

- Report on any open runs/issues & concerns
- Continue monitoring OPS and Outlook & dispatching while the 10 AM dispatcher prepares the next day board sheet.
- Begin to finalize daily board sheet. Transfer information from written copy to computer. Do not forget to send a copy to the 10 AM dispatcher.
- All time requirements must be followed
- Complete daily & file with daily board sheet package.
- Daily List is subject to change.

2.7.2 10 AM Shift Duties

2.7.2.1 Shift Start

- Check-in with 3 am dispatcher for shift review.
- Make a copy of supplementary boards...linehaul & Connector.... (this will not be your final board/but a pre-work up to give you an idea of work being issued.) Work can be added/deleted until 11:30 am!!!
- Log-in to OPS and Outlook.
- Read emails/respond if needed.
- Remove supplementary boards by 11:30 am. Compare the original supp-board to copy-be sure to look out for any new addition request to supp-board.
- Retrieve keys to vehicles for relief runs
- Start preparing daily board for the next day. (must be posted by the time the 1st regular run is due back)
- Load work into OPS
- Sign approved request for leaves and give to payroll. (UB/CB must be approved by management)

2.7.2.2 PM Pullout

- Use mileage sheet/bus pullout map/copy of run guides/written daily board sheet...be sure to receive an electronic copy of the board sheet from 3 am dispatcher
- Record all pm call-offs on daily board sheet/in OPS.
- Assign buses to linehaul & Connector operators. (record run # on map-record bus # on mileage sheet)
- Communicate to Connector dispatch (also known as D-ls) of open runs, call-offs, bus issues and concerns)
- Monitor runs in OPS (any work not covered must be cut...be sure to identify these cuts to Central Dispatch)
- Communicate with other terminal dispatchers regarding Mile Road cuts.
- Send Email(s) "List of Cuts" to Central Dispatch/Customer Service/Terminal Dispatch/Terminal Manager/Asst. VP.
- Distribute violations & complaints to PM operators/make copies/return original to management.
- Continue monitoring OPS and Outlook (record call-offs/assign work/update finalized board sheet/document bus assignment, etc.)

2.7.2.3 8 PM Shift Transition

- Gather/organize daily paperwork from dispatch bin.
- Send final copy of daily board sheet to 8 pm dispatcher, payroll, office supervisor/terminal manager/asst. VP-electronically
- Make copies & file. (ATU/Teamsters)
- Follow all time requirements.

2.7.3 8 PM Shift Duties

- Check-in with 10 AM dispatcher for shift review.
- Log-in to OPS and Outlook.
- Read emails/respond if needed.
- Return keys to keywatch if necessary.
- Load work into OPS
- Process linehaul exception cards/Connector paysheets. Be sure to input information in OPS. (please put it in alphabetical order)
- End the day in OPS & transfer to timekeeping.

- Stock/refill/post any detours bulletins/driver notices/accident sheets/miscellaneous sheets, etc. In the lounge.
- Prepare supplementary boards for the week.
- Monitor/update work on supplementary board daily.

2.7.3.1 3 AM Shift Transition

- Assign buses to linehaul & connectors operators on garage map and post near sit monitor. (Inform 3 AM dispatcher of any shortages)
- Assign buses in OPS (yard management)
- Received violations & complaints/update ops with message for operator to see dispatch. Block sign-in-
- Make copies of paddles for operators who requested extra work or listed on supplementary board.
- Make sure all exception cards/connector pay sheets/RFLs/Boards/MCT/FML pay requests (from previous day) are complete and delivered to payroll.
- Assist 3 AM dispatcher with pullout. (ex: uniform inspection/issue violations & complaints/hand out paystubs ,etc.)

APPENDIX A LOST AND FOUND PROCEDURES

- Publicized lost & found hours are Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
- All items turned into dispatch must be recorded.
- Items of value such as wallets and purses **must be stored in a secure place.**
- Low-value items such as clothing, book bags, books, etc. will be placed in a large box near the dispatcher window.
- Bicycles must be stored with maintenance.
- Due to limited space-items will be discarded at the end of the month.
- Send all unclaimed valuables such as phones/wallets/purses/IDs and important documents to the Buhl Building (downtown)

APPENDIX B LABOR AGREEMENT EXCERPTS

ARTICLE 11 EXTRA BOARD

Section 1. The scheduling and assignment of Extra Board Operators will be as follows:

- Extra Board assignments will be posted daily, normally by 2:00 p.m. Each Extra Board Operator is responsible for checking his/her daily assignment.
- Extra Board work assignments may be assigned to the extent possible to allow Extra Board Operators to become familiar with a variety of service areas.
- Hours will be rotated so that each Extra Board Operator receives as close to 40 hours as possible each week, provided that the Operator is available and reports for work for the entire week.
- The Authority may construct and implement a seven-day Extra Board when in the decision of the Authority staffing levels permit it to do so. Each day of the Extra Board including weekend days will have Employees assigned on a rotating basis. (Example: In the event no Operator signs up for a 5:00 a.m. Extra Board assignment, an Operator assigned to the A.M. Extra Board on that day would be assigned to complete the assignment, however such Employee would be granted an alternative day off during the same workweek).
- On days of the week on which the Authority establishes an Extra Board, there will be an A.M. schedule and Midday schedule. These schedules will be offered to Operators during the run pick, pursuant to Article 10, Section 1.
- The A. M. Extra Board schedule shall be defined by those assignments which start before 10:00 a.m.
- The Midday schedule shall be defined by those assignments which start at or after 10:00 a.m.
- The Authority shall determine the number of Extra Board schedule assignments to be offered as A. schedule assignments and Midday schedule assignments. Hours shall be rotated amongst Operators for each schedule pursuant to Section C. above.
- F. Operators shall be allowed to exchange run assignments for one single service day pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding Exchange of Run Assignments.
- G. Except in emergency situations, Extra Board Operators will not be required to report to work more than two times in any one operating day.

- Section 2. Extra Board Operators who successfully bid for vacancies will be exempt from Section 1 until such time as they return to the Extra Board rotation.
- Section 3. All Extra Board Employees will be required to work split shifts.
- Section 4. Hold Down Assignments.
- A hold down assignment is defined as work that is open for a minimum of one week.
- Hold down assignments are picked or forced for the duration of an absence until the next run pick.
- Hold downs are picked by seniority and/or forced, if not picked, on to the lowest seniority Operator who does not have a current hold down. Operators assigned to a hold down may pick future hold downs if their current hold down assignment ends before the future assignment begins.

ARTICLE 11A SUPPLEMENTARY BOARD

The following Supplementary Board procedure will be used to distribute overtime assignments.

Supplementary Board Rotation

- Open work will be posted daily (not weekly) for the next day.
- Open work is defined as work that is known to be open prior to 2:00 p.m. the day before. Open work for Saturday is defined as work that is known to the Authority prior to 2:00 p.m. on Friday.
- Open work for Sunday and Monday is defined as work that is known to be open prior to 2:00 p.m. on Saturday. Work which is less than two (2) hours as determined by management may be assigned at the Authority's discretion.
- Work that becomes available after 2:00 p.m. the day before is not considered Supplementary Board work.
- Supplementary Boards for Saturday will be removed on Friday at 1:00 p.m. and for Sunday and Monday will be removed on Saturday at 1:00 p.m. The day and time a board will be removed may change on Holidays.
- Operators must sign up for work by 1:00 p.m. on the preceding day. For example, an Operator desiring to work on Wednesday must sign up for work by 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday. Failure to sign up for work by 1:00 p.m. on the preceding day will result in the Operator being passed by for the overtime assignment and considered as if they worked the assignment.

APPENDIX C REQUEST FOR LEAVE

SMART Department of Human Resource and Personnel Administration

Request for Leave

Name	Badge Number
Title	
Linehaul/Connector (Circle Please)	Run#
Department: Operations	Terminal:
For period of from (Mo/Day/Year/Time)	Through (Mo/Day/Year/Time)
No of Days	No of Hours

Indicate Type of Leave

☐ Vacation (single day/week/not-to exceed vacation accrued) (Circle Please)

☐ Leave of Absence (Not more than 12 months) (Provide explanation below)

☐ Sick (Illness, Injury, Maternity) (Attach doctor's statement)

☐ Military (Reservist-Attach verification-15 calendar days only) (Active-Attach copy of order)

☐ Official (jury duty, union business, comp/bus, court, bereavement, Etc.)

(Provide explanation below)

☐ Personal Day (PLD)

Reason Request (Official and Leave without Pay)

Add details here

Employee Signature	Date
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Approvals

Dispatch Supervisor	Date
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Dept. AVP/Manager	Date
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Probationary employees are not eligible for vacation, personal leave, or sick time without pay. Requests for annual leave must be submitted to the Connector Operations or AVP of Bus Operations at least two (2)

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