



JOIN THE TEAM THAT DRIVES THE FUTURE

A Regional School Bus Driver Recruitment Campaign

2026 NSPRA Gold Medallion Award Entry Marketing Campaign



Thomas Gould, APR, Director of Communications, Howell Public Schools
GouldT@HowellSchools.com, 517.548.6335
Megan Kelley, Communications Specialist, Livingston ESA
Caton Walter, Communications Specialist, Livingston ESA

Howell Public Schools
411 N. Highlander Way
Howell, MI 48834

PreK-12 Public School District
Enrollment: 7,132

Campaign Communications Team (Howell Public Schools + Livingston ESA): 3

The Howell Public Schools communications team (one communicator) led the development and execution of this regional recruitment campaign, with strong support from the Livingston ESA communications team (two communicators). While this entry is submitted by Howell Public Schools, the campaign supported all five Livingston ESA RTC member districts, collectively serving approximately 20,000 students across Livingston County.

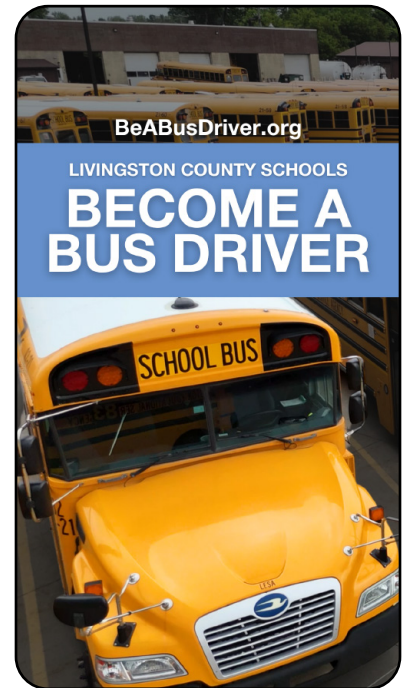
SYNOPSIS

During the 2024–2025 school year, the Livingston Educational Service Agency Regional Transportation Cooperative (Livingston ESA RTC), a partnership of four school districts and one educational service agency serving 20,066 students, faced critical school bus driver shortages that disrupted transportation services across the county. Persistent staffing constraints led to frequent route cancellations, inconsistent service, and operational strain for transportation departments. These disruptions created stress for families and affected student attendance, underscoring the urgent need for a coordinated, regional recruitment effort.

In response, a comprehensive, multi-district bus driver recruitment campaign was launched during the summer of 2025. Guided by a strategic public relations planning process (RPIE), the campaign aimed to recruit, train, and hire enough bus drivers to fully staff transportation departments by the start of the 2025–26 school year. Of the five member districts, only Howell and Livingston ESA had dedicated communications staff; therefore, the campaign was intentionally designed to be turnkey and easily implemented across districts with varying communications capacity.

Research included operational data, informal qualitative conversations with current transportation staff, a competitive scan of surrounding districts, and an environmental scan. This research identified two primary candidate demographics: recent retirees seeking flexible, purpose-driven work and parents of school-aged children attracted to schedules aligned with the school calendar. These insights directly shaped the campaign’s messaging and strategy.

Under the campaign theme *Join the Team That Drives the Future!*, the high-visibility, cross-media recruitment campaign featured digital, radio, streaming, and outdoor advertising; a countywide social media campaign; a video series featuring current bus drivers; a Bus Driver Try-it-Out Day, and in-person recruitment; print materials; and media relations.



The campaign produced measurable results. Across member districts, 95 individuals expressed interest, with 30 drivers hired by the start of the school year. Staffing levels increased across all participating districts, significantly reducing the risk of route cancellations and service disruptions. Beyond hiring outcomes, the campaign reinforced the districts’ commitment to addressing transportation challenges.

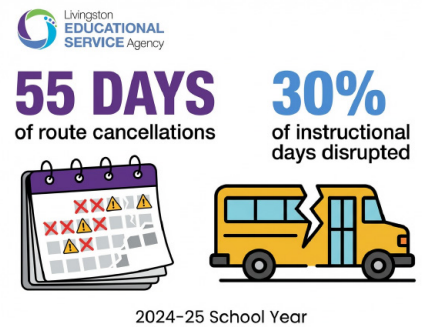
RESEARCH

Problem Statement

During the 2024-2025 school year, member districts of the Livingston ESA Regional Transportation Cooperative were experiencing critical bus driver shortages that threatened the reliability of student transportation services. Route cancellations disrupt attendance, strain operations, and undermine family confidence in school systems. Although districts have historically conducted independent recruitment efforts, these fragmented campaigns have produced inconsistent messaging and limited reach. No single district possesses the budget or capacity to achieve sufficient message saturation to compete in the regional labor market. Without a coordinated, unified recruitment strategy, staffing instability will continue to jeopardize transportation access and operational continuity.

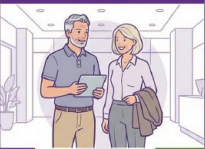

The Livingston ESA RTC bus driver recruitment campaign was informed by a combination of formal and informal research methods designed to understand both the scope of the staffing challenge and the motivations of prospective drivers.

Internal operational data from member districts confirmed that bus driver shortages were resulting in service interruptions, canceled routes, and increased strain across transportation departments. While comprehensive baseline data was not consistently available across all member districts during the research phase, data from Howell Public Schools illustrated the severity of the issue, through May of 2025, on 55 days, at least one bus route was canceled during the 2024–25 school year due to staffing constraints, meaning transportation service was disrupted on more than 30% of the district’s 180 instructional days.



TARGET AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS



RETIREEES	PARENTS
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeking flexible, purpose-driven work• Supplemental income✓ Stay active & engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attracted to school-aligned schedules• Work-life balance✓ Family-friendly hours

To better understand potential candidates, the campaign team conducted one-on-one qualitative conversations with current bus drivers and transportation directors across member districts, informed by baseline knowledge from prior small-scale recruitment efforts. These discussions revealed two primary driver demographics: recent retirees seeking supplemental income, flexibility, and purposeful work; and parents of school-aged children attracted to schedules aligned with the school calendar. Additionally, the conversations revealed that most of the bus drivers lived in Livingston County with some residing very close to the county line in neighboring counties. With that information, the communications team used geofencing of Livingston

County plus 15 miles in all directions to target streaming, outdoor and video advertising.

In addition, the team conducted a competitive compensation scan reviewing wages, benefits, and sign-on bonuses offered by surrounding school districts and private transportation providers. This data showed that while the Livingston ESA RTC offered competitive wages and stronger fringe benefits than private providers, its sign-on bonus was thousands of dollars less than all other local districts and private providers. This analysis enabled the communications team to advocate and receive approval to offer a tiered sign-on bonus up to \$5,000, to attract potential candidates and ensure recruitment messaging accurately reflected the regional labor market.

PLANNING

Goal

The goal of the campaign was to eliminate existing bus driver vacancies and stabilize student transportation services across Livingston ESA RTC member districts ahead of the 2025–26 school year.

Objective

By the first day of the 2025–26 school year, Livingston ESA RTC member districts will have fully staffed Transportation Departments allowing each district to effectively and consistently provide transportation services.

Rather than establishing uniform numeric hiring targets, the campaign adopted a shared, outcome-based objective centered on operational readiness. This approach reflected the cooperative’s regional structure, varying district size and staffing needs, and differences in access to analytics data. The campaign was intentionally designed to be turnkey and scalable, ensuring equitable participation regardless of internal communications capacity.

Target Publics

Primary publics included recent retirees seeking flexible, purpose-driven work and parents of school-aged children attracted to schedules aligned with the school calendar. These groups were treated with equal priority, with messaging emphasizing flexibility, community impact, and pride in service. Another primary public was current bus drivers employed outside the cooperative.

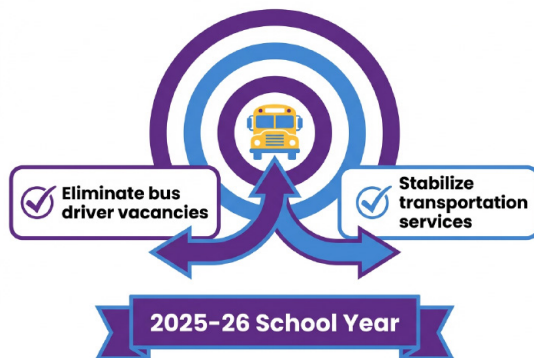
A secondary public of families of enrolled students was identified. While messaging was not targeted to this audience, several of the strategies and tactics reached them. This reinforced the member district’s commitment to resolving the bus driver shortage.

Approach

The campaign adopted a regional turnkey strategy built on centralized development and decentralized participation. Core messaging, visuals, and paid media were created centrally to maintain consistency, while districts retained flexibility to implement materials locally. This structure allowed for message discipline while respecting local identity and capacity.

Centralizing creative development ensured consistent branding and economies of scale across districts. Paid advertising was branded as “Livingston County Schools” to reflect the joint regional effort without overcrowding limited ad space with multiple district logos. Co-branded materials such as banners and flyers incorporated both the Livingston County Schools identity and individual district logos, balancing regional unity with local representation. This approach maintained visual clarity, strengthened campaign recognition, and ensured equitable access to turnkey assets. Streamlined materials reduced administrative burden and allowed districts with limited communications capacity to participate fully, an important consideration given the compressed timeline and small communications team managing the campaign.

CAMPAIGN GOAL



PLANNING

Key Messages

The campaign was anchored by the theme *Join the Team That Drives the Future!* and supported by consistent key messages pillars:

- Rewarding career/ making a daily difference for students
- A schedule aligned with family life
- An ideal retirement opportunity
- Pride in professional service
- Competitive incentives, including a sign-on bonus of up to \$5,000

Strategies and Tactics

Use digital media to recruit prospective bus drivers

- Deploy a coordinated digital campaign using shared social calendars, video storytelling, digital banners, marquees, and district communication channels to deliver consistent messaging and repeated regional exposure.

Use paid advertising to achieve market saturation

- Leverage radio, streaming audio, digital advertising, print placements, video pre-roll, social media ads, and billboards to compete effectively in the regional labor market.

Activate in-person recruitment opportunities

- Engage prospective candidates through community events and hands-on experiences, including the Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day.

Use print materials to reinforce visibility

- Distribute flyers, banners, postcards, and print advertising across high-traffic community locations and district channels.

Generate earned media through strategic media relations

- Secure local media coverage to amplify awareness and position bus driving as a respected, purpose-driven career.

CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES



Budget

The campaign budget was built on a pooled funding model, with Livingston ESA RTC member districts reallocating their individual recruitment budgets to support a coordinated regional effort. This approach allowed for centralized media placement, creating economies of scale, increasing regional market saturation, and enabling a level of campaign visibility that would not have been achievable independently. Because the initiative required shared financial commitment, the campaign plan was presented to member district superintendents and school business officials for approval prior to launch.

Planning Constraints

The campaign was developed under several operational constraints, including a small cross-district communications team, a compressed summer hiring timeline, varying communications capacity among districts, and limited recruitment budgets. These factors informed the decision to implement a centralized, turnkey strategy designed to maximize efficiency, equity, and scalability across all member districts.

IMPLEMENTATION

A three-person communications team executed the countywide recruitment campaign across five member districts. Campaign execution was led by Howell Public Schools with strong support from the Livingston ESA communications team. Staffing limitations within the communications team required an efficient, scalable approach to the campaign. A local contact was established in each member district without a dedicated school communicator to support the distribution of campaign materials. Implementation required coordination among districts, transportation leadership, and human resources staff.

The cross-media campaign used paid, earned, shared, and owned media to reinforce one another. Based on The Rule of 7, messaging was sequenced to ensure repeated exposure across multiple channels, allowing prospective candidates to encounter the campaign through both digital and community touchpoints. This layered approach increased visibility, built familiarity, and supported sustained recruitment momentum.

Paid media was centrally developed and placed, including digital, radio, streaming, and online advertising. Some districts locally boosted social media posts to extend reach, but this was not part of the coordinated campaign. All social media copy was developed centrally and distributed through a shared calendar featuring staggered posting schedules across districts. This structure reinforced key messages through repeated exposure, while visual assets were customized to reflect each district's branding and imagery. Additional tactics included video storytelling, print materials, in-person recruitment events, media outreach, and a regional Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day.

CROSS-MEDIA APPROACH

PAID

- Radio, digital, streaming ads



EARNED

- Media coverage, press



SHARED

- Social media campaign

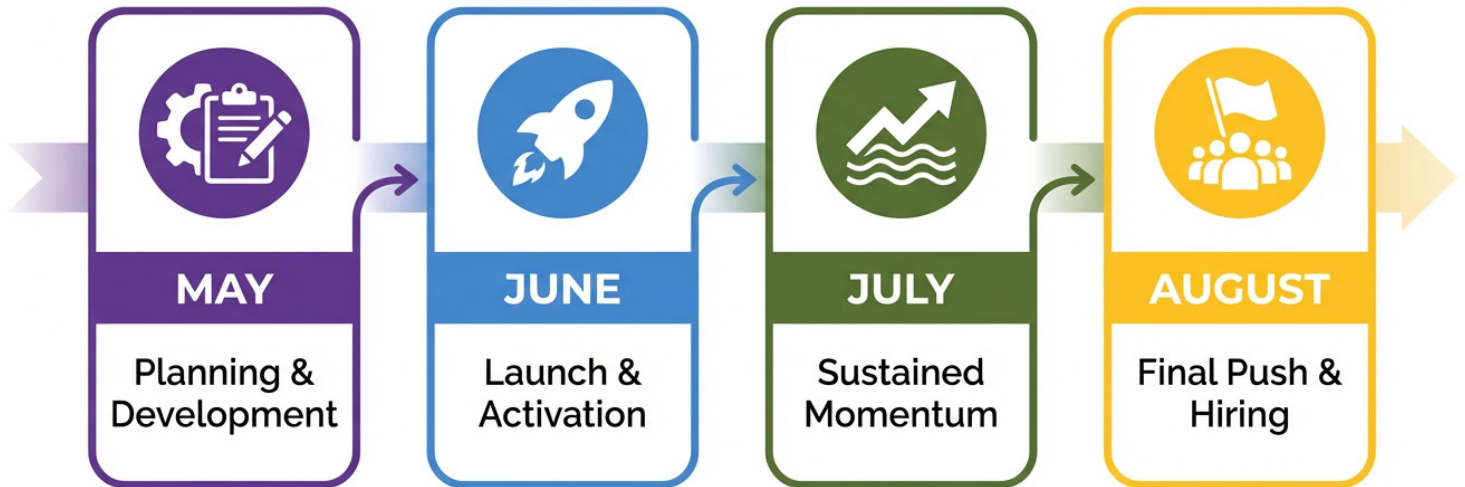


OWNED

- Websites, newsletters



IMPLEMENTATION



In May 2025, the campaign entered its planning and collateral development phase. The communications plan was finalized, presented and approved, messaging was refined to align with research findings and target audiences, and a coordinated social media calendar was created to ensure regional consistency. Paid advertising was secured, video production planning began, and recruitment materials were developed to support both digital and in-person outreach. All assets were designed to be turnkey and immediately deployable by member districts.

The marketing and communications campaign officially launched in early June 2025. Paid digital and radio advertising began alongside a coordinated social media rollout across districts. Recruitment materials such as flyers were distributed through district and partner locations, and media outreach initiated to build early awareness. The cross-media launch generated immediate visibility.

In late June 2025, the campaign shifted into an activation phase. The regional Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day gave prospective candidates hands-on exposure to the profession, including opportunities to meet current drivers and test-drive a bus. The short-form and long-form video series was released, highlighting authentic employee stories aligned to the campaign's key messages. In-person recruitment events throughout the region began, supported by sustained social media posts.

Throughout July 2025, ongoing paid advertising and staggered messaging maintained momentum. Districts reinforced outreach locally while candidate follow-up and onboarding coordination became a priority, helping move applicants through the hiring pipeline.

By August 2025, the campaign entered its final phase. Paid advertising concluded with social media messaging running through mid-August, and recruitment materials were incorporated into back-to-school publications and events as one final touchpoint with the community.

This phased implementation ensured continuous visibility, repeated message exposure, and a steady flow of qualified candidates throughout the recruitment window.

EVALUATION

Between June and August 2025, staffing levels increased across all five Livingston ESA RTC member districts, with net gains ranging from five to nine drivers per district. In total, 30 drivers were hired or in the human resources process during the two-and-a-half-month campaign period. At Howell Public Schools, staffing increased from 38 to 46 drivers and substitutes, contributing to improved transportation stability ahead of the school year.

Across Facebook and Instagram, four member districts shared 72 recruitment posts, generating 2,359 total engagements. Based on industry benchmarks, these posts likely generated between 60,000 and 120,000 impressions. A strong number of shares extended the content's reach beyond district-owned audiences and into the broader community. Four member districts implemented the coordinated calendar.

Paid digital advertising generated more than 2.9 million impressions, successfully saturating the regional market and reinforcing key messages. While click-through rates were below industry benchmarks, campaign success was measured primarily by awareness and broad visibility rather than direct engagement.

In-person recruitment efforts also proved effective. The regional Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day exceeded expectations, with attendance more than triple that of a previous district-level event. Additionally, following each community event, there was an increase in interest form completions.

While the campaign successfully met hiring targets across member districts, the evaluation identified opportunities for refinement and improvement. Future campaigns should launch earlier in the year to allow additional time for recruitment, onboarding, and training. Improvements to analytics and referral tracking will strengthen the ability to evaluate the success of the campaign strategies and tactics. Expanding event locations and increased internal coordination will likely support a stronger and more coordinated campaign.

Overall, the campaign successfully achieved its primary objective of eliminating vacancies and stabilizing transportation staffing ahead of the 2025–26 school year. Hiring progress across all member districts, combined with expanded awareness and recruitment pipelines, demonstrated measurable movement toward operational stability. The evaluation confirms that a coordinated, regional recruitment strategy can produce scalable staffing outcomes within a compressed timeline.

HIRING RESULTS



RESEARCH SUPPLEMENTAL

Prior to the campaign, Livingston ESA RTC member districts were experiencing significant transportation strain due to unfilled bus driver positions. At Howell Public Schools alone, from August 2024 to May 2025, at least one bus route was canceled on 55 instructional days due to staffing constraints, disrupting service on more than 30% of the district's 180 school days.

In another member district, transportation leadership implemented rolling route cancellations, suspending specific routes for two weeks at a time to provide families more time to plan for service interruptions.

Recruitment efforts had historically been conducted independently by each member district, resulting in fragmented messaging, limited market saturation, and duplicated effort. Within the previous 12 years, no coordinated, countywide recruitment initiative had been implemented.

Competitive Labor Market Analysis

As part of the research phase, the campaign team conducted a regional compensation scan of surrounding public school districts to assess competitiveness in wages and sign-on bonuses.

District	Fully Credentialed Bus Driver Sign-On Bonus	CDL Sign-On Bonus	Non-Credentialed/Paid Training Program	Starting Pay Range
Lansing Public	\$750.00	N/A	\$500.00	Up to \$22.00
Lake Fenton	\$2,000.00	N/A	\$1,000.00	Up to \$18.00
Brandon	\$2,000.00	N/A	\$1,000.00	Up to \$22.00
Farmington	\$1,000.00	\$750.00	\$500.00	N/A
Ann Arbor	\$5,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$500.00	Up to \$25.00
East Lansing	\$750.00	N/A	\$500.00	Up to \$22.00
Southfield	\$4,000.00	N/A	\$2,000.00	Up to \$27.00
Flint	\$2,000.00	N/A	\$1,000.00	Up to \$20.00
Northville	\$5,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$500.00	N/A

The analysis showed that while Livingston ESA RTC starting wages (\$20.78–\$23.07/hour) were competitive within the regional range, its existing \$500 sign-on bonus was significantly lower than competitors, with two offering up to \$5,000 and several in the \$2,000–\$4,000 range.

To remain competitive, the RTC restructured its incentive model into a tiered sign-on bonus system:

- \$5,000 for fully licensed drivers
- \$2,000 for individuals entering the paid training program

This research directly informed the campaign's messaging around competitive pay, sign-on bonus visibility, and recruitment urgency. It also reinforced the need for message saturation to stand out in a highly competitive labor market.

PLANNING SUPPLEMENTAL

Campaign Goal

The goal of the campaign was to eliminate existing bus driver vacancies and stabilize student transportation services across Livingston ESA RTC member districts ahead of the 2025–26 school year.

Campaign Objective

By the first day of the 2025–26 school year, Livingston ESA RTC member districts will have fully staffed Transportation Departments allowing each district to effectively and consistently provide transportation services.

Target Audiences

Primary Publics

- Recent or young retirees seeking flexible, purpose-driven work
- Parents of school-aged children seeking school-aligned schedules

Secondary Public

- Families of students enrolled in Livingston ESA RTC member districts

Key Messages/Themes

Primary Publics

- Rewarding career/ making a daily difference for students
 - Positive impact on students
 - Essential role in supporting academic success
 - Meaningful contribution to the local community
- A schedule aligned with family life
 - A schedule that works
 - School-aligned hours
 - Work-life balance
 - Predictable scheduling
- An ideal retirement opportunity
 - Flexible supplemental income
 - Retired but not tired
 - Purpose-driven post-retirement work
 - Opportunity to stay active and engaged
- Pride in professional service
 - Safety and reliability
 - Professional responsibility
 - Respect for the role
- Competitive incentives/wages
- Sign-on bonus of up to \$5,000
- Great starting wage
- Paid benefits/cash in lieu of

Campaign Budget

Each member district historically operated with limited recruitment budgets, restricting the scale of individual campaigns. By pooling resources into a joint regional effort, the cooperative implemented a significantly larger campaign that maximized reach while minimizing duplication of effort. Investments focused on high-impact tactics including paid digital and radio advertising, video production, and print materials for community outreach.

Item	Cost
Video Series	\$10,500.00
Paid Advertising	\$22,520.00
Printed Flyers	\$1,000.00
Banners	\$2,000.00
Try-it-Out Day Supplies	\$300.00
Squishy Buses	\$2,047.24
Contingency	\$4,000.00
Total	\$42,367.24

PLANNING SUPPLEMENTAL

Strategies and Tactics

Use Digital Media To Recruit Prospective Bus Drivers

- Coordinated social media campaign
- Develop a common social media calendar to be used by all Livingston ESA RTC member districts, with two posts per week. Districts will post the messages based on a staggered schedule, allowing maximum coverage within the county and surrounding areas.
 - Posts will share the benefits of the job, reasons why current bus drivers like their job, promote a sign-on bonus, share the need for additional drivers, etc.
- Design social media graphics to accompany the social media posts customized by district.
- Use a mix of posts, promoted posts, and paid ads to expand the reach of the messages.
- Develop video series highlighting a career as a bus driver
 - Videos would be shared on social media, websites, and Livingston ESA RTC member district e-newsletters
 - Posts on social media would be promoted to expand the reach of each video
 - Videos would feature current bus drivers from Livingston ESA RTC member districts sharing their experiences
 - Short form and long form videos
- Banner ads on Livingston ESA RTC member district webpages and digital marquee
 - Changed every two weeks to remain fresh
 - Aligned to key messages and themes
- Messages in Livingston ESA RTC member districts' e-newsletters

Use Media Relations To Recruit Prospective Bus Drivers

- Issue a press release on the Bus Driver Try-it-Out Day
- Invite the media to drive a bus



Use Paid Advertising To Recruit Prospective Bus Drivers

- Radio and web ads on WHMI
- Streaming audio ads
- Display ads
- Ads on streaming video services/YouTube
- Social media ads, as mentioned above
- Billboards in key areas (look outside the county to recruit current bus drivers from other areas)

Use In-Person Events To Recruit Prospective Bus Drivers

- Information at district back-to-school events
- Information at community events located in member districts
- Bus Driver Try-it-Out Day
 - Meet current drivers
 - Hear about the career, benefits, etc.
 - Test drive a school bus to see what it is like
 - Promote the event on social media and in the Livingston ESA RTC member district communications

Use Print Materials To Recruit Prospective Bus Drivers

- Design new campaign flyers
- Distribute flyers in and around member districts
- Use flyers at in-person events
- Flyers displayed back-to-school events
- Large banners at key locations in Livingston ESA RTC member districts

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPLEMENTAL

Campaign Implementation Overview

The Livingston ESA RTC bus driver recruitment campaign was a cross-media recruitment strategy executed over a two-and-a-half-month period (June–August 2025). Campaign leadership consisted of three communications professionals working on behalf of four public school districts and one educational service agency, requiring centralized coordination and scalable execution.

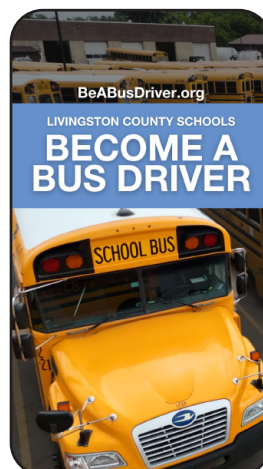
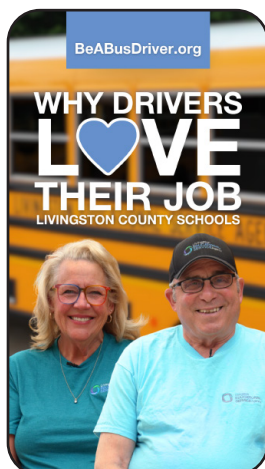
Creative development, paid media placement, and video production were centrally managed to ensure consistency, efficiency, and market saturation across the region.

The campaign was branded as Livingston County Schools to reflect the joint effort of the Livingston ESA RTC member districts. This approach maximized the limited space available in display and audio advertising while maintaining a clear and unified identity. Branding the campaign as Livingston County Schools also helped connect the effort to local districts, with which most families have stronger familiarity than with the regional educational service agency.

Where space allowed, including on printed materials and within the video series, the logos of all member districts were included. All campaign collateral can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/4smJquU>.

Professionally Produced Video Campaign

Both short-form and traditional video assets were developed. The videos featured current Livingston ESA RTC bus drivers and aligned with the campaign's key messages. The short form videos were used in various social media posts and directed views back to a video hosting site to view the traditional long-form videos. Additionally, the long-form videos were embedded in district websites and used in e-newsletters. Sample videos are linked from the images below, the full series can be found at <https://bit.ly/3MOFCDB>.



IMPLEMENTATION SUPPLEMENTAL

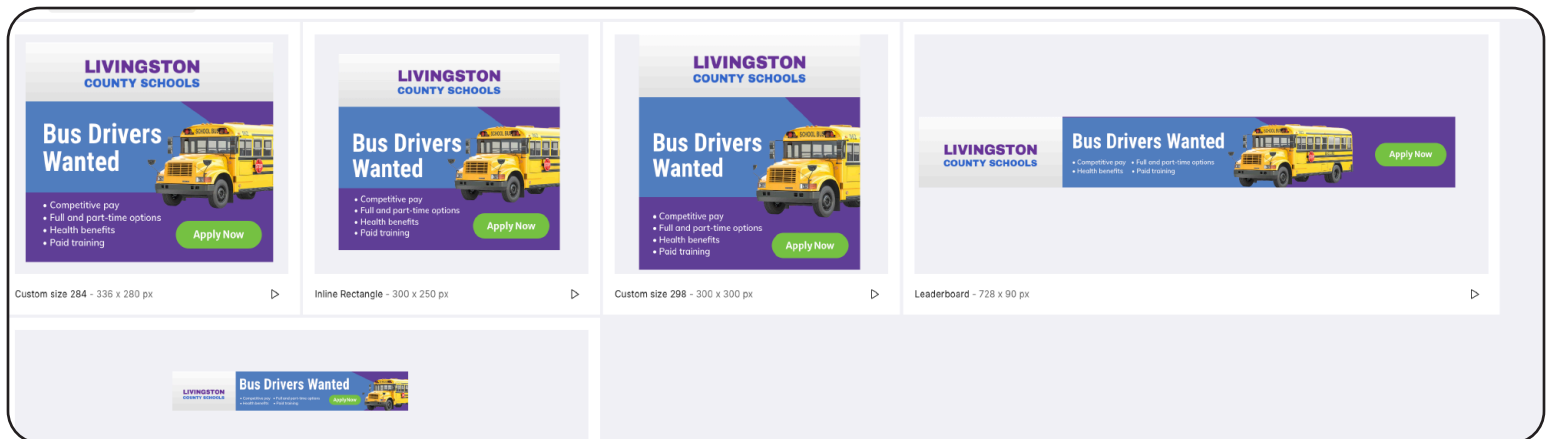
Paid Media

The campaign utilized traditional radio advertising on the local Livingston County radio station, streaming audio ads, online display advertising, and streaming video pre-roll ads within the targeted area. This paid media strategy was intentionally structured to achieve high-frequency exposure and reinforce message recall among prospective applicants. All paid media directed interested candidates to BeABusDriver.org, which served as the campaign's central recruitment landing site.

Across the various paid media platforms, the campaign included:

- 2,555,151 display ad impressions
- 142,865 video pre-roll impressions
- 111,558 streaming audio impressions
- 100,000 digital out-of-home (billboard) impressions
- 500 traditional radio ads

With over 2.9 million digital and outdoor impressions and 500 radio advertising placements, the paid media aspect of the campaign reinforced both awareness and message recall in a competitive labor market.



Media Relations

The communications team leveraged media relations to inform the community and prospective applicants about the Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day. A press release and media advisory were distributed to local and regional media outlets, resulting in coverage from multiple local news organizations as well as a regional television station.

Top: Sample display ads

Right: Media hit in local newspaper

Bus drivers in Livingston County could see \$5K sign-on bonus

Evan Sasiela
Livingston Daily
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Interested in becoming a school bus driver in Livingston County? An upcoming event will help you get started.

"Try-It-Out Day" runs 4-7 p.m. June 25 at the Howell Public Schools Transportation Department, 1913 W. Highland

Road, according to a release.

The event, hosted by the Livingston Regional Transportation Consortium, is designed to give participants "firsthand insight into the responsibilities of a school bus driver." They'll have a chance to test drive in a safe, controlled setting, and don't need a commercial driver's license to take part.

Current bus drivers and trainers will

answer questions, explain the CDL training process, and describe the day-to-day experience of transporting students, according to the release.

Organizers believe the event will appeal to parents seeking a schedule that aligns with the school calendar, or retirees looking for flexible, part-time work that supports their local schools.

Districts in Livingston County are hir-

ing full-time and substitute bus drivers for the upcoming school year. Available positions include a sign-on bonus of up to \$5,000, paid CDL training, school-year schedules, paid holidays, retirement benefits and medical coverage.

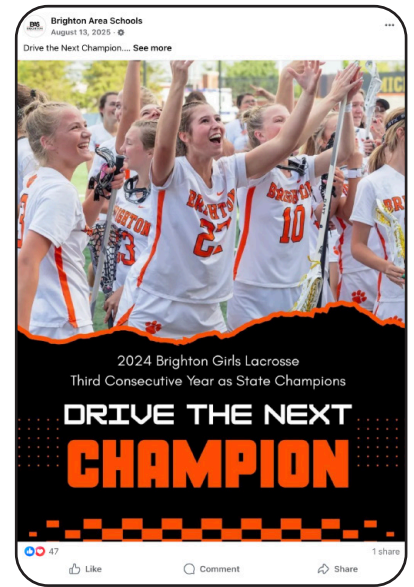
Learn more at beabusdriver.org.
— Contact reporter Evan Sasiela at esasiela@livingstondaily.com. Follow him on X @SasielaEvan.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPLEMENTAL

Social Media

The social media content calendar included 20 posts per member district (two posts per week for 10 weeks). While the messaging remained consistent across districts, posts were staggered so that each district shared different messages each week. This coordinated structure ensured repeated exposure across the county and reinforced campaign messaging throughout the recruitment period. The full social media calendar and graphics set can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/4qXG6oJ>.

Many of the graphics accompanying the posts were customized to reflect each member district's branding and imagery while maintaining overall campaign consistency. Most posts directed prospective applicants to BeABusDriver.org, while select posts linked to the campaign's video series to support storytelling and engagement.



Week 1	
Post 1 Looking for a job that works around your life? Being a bus driver offers a family-friendly schedule and paid training to get you rolling. Apply now: BeABusDriver.Org	Post 1 Graphic Link
Post 2 Be the hero behind the wheel. Every morning, every ride, you're making a difference. Learn how to get started at BeABusDriver.Org	Post 2 Graphic Link
Week 2	
Post 1 Be part of the moments they'll never forget. Drive the bus that takes them on their next big adventure. Learn more at BeABusDriver.org	Post 1 Graphic Link
Post 2 A job with heart, purpose, and perks. Drive students to success — and drive your career forward. Get started: BeABusDriver.Org	Post 2 Graphic Link
Week 3	
Post 1 Your job. Their journey. Bus drivers are trusted adults who guide more than just routes, they guide lives. Drive with purpose. Apply today: BeABusDriver.Org	Post 1 Graphic Link
Post 2 Make mornings meaningful. Help kids start the day with a smile — and earn great pay while doing it. Become a bus driver: BeABusDriver.Org	Post 2 Graphic Link

Sample social media posts and sample social media calendar.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPLEMENTAL

Print Materials

The communications team developed updated print materials for use across member districts. Co-branded flyers were created and distributed throughout member districts, used at in-person recruitment events, and included in back-to-school packets to reach families and prospective applicants. Co-branded banners were also developed and placed in high-visibility locations within each member district to reinforce campaign awareness and support ongoing recruitment.

These materials combined the Livingston County Schools campaign color scheme with individual district logos, ensuring both regional consistency and local recognition.

*Right: A sample of the campaign flyer.
Below: A sample of the outdoor banner which was produced in two sizes 3 feet x 6 feet and 5 feet x 12 feet.*

We're Hiring Bus Drivers!
Starting at \$20.78/hr to \$23.07/hr

Apply today at BeABusDriver.Org

- ✔ Nights, weekends, and summers are optional
- ✔ Eligible for retirement benefits!
- ✔ Spend time relaxing with Paid Holidays
- ✔ Not trained? We provide quality PAID training.
- ✔ Medical Insurance
BCBS PPO Single Coverage OR \$5,000 Cash in Lieu (for full-time drivers)
- ✔ Substitute Driver Bonus
Earn \$10 each AM/PM shift you drive, take home up to an extra \$100/week

Sign-On Bonus Tiers
Incentives run through Sept. 2025, or until fully-staffed

Full-Time Route Driver Licensed & Trained	Substitute Driver Licensed & Trained	New Driver Needs Licensure & Training
\$5,000	\$3,000	\$2,000

Sign-on bonus is paid out in two installments, second installment follows six months of employment

Bus Drivers Wanted
Up to \$5,000 Sign-On Bonus

- ✔ Health Benefits
- ✔ Paid Training
- ✔ Competitive Pay
- ✔ Full & Part-Time Options

Apply today at: BeABusDriver.Org

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPLEMENTAL

In-Person and Event Recruitment

The campaign utilized two types of in-person recruitment activities. The first was a regional Bus Driver Try-it-Out Day, which allowed prospective applicants to meet current bus drivers, learn about wages and benefits, and test drive a school bus in a supportive environment. The second involved securing booth space at several summer festivals and community events across member districts, providing visibility to large numbers of attendees. Flyers and promotional “squishy bus” giveaways were distributed at these events, and volunteers collected names and contact information from interested candidates. Transportation directors from each member district followed up directly with prospective applicants, helping move interested candidates into the hiring pipeline.

Right: Social media graphic used to promote the Bus Driver Try-it-Out Day.



A social media graphic for Howell Public Schools. The top half features a photograph of a smiling man leaning out of a yellow school bus window, with other children visible behind him. Below the photo is a red octagonal stop sign. The bottom half of the graphic has a green background with yellow text that reads: **BUS DRIVER TRY-IT-OUT DAY**. To the right of this text is the Howell Public Schools logo, a large yellow 'H' with 'HOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS' written below it. At the bottom, on a yellow background, is the event information: **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025 | 4:00-7:00 P.M.**, **HOWELL TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**, and **1313 W. HIGHLAND RD., HOWELL, MI 48843**.

District Webpage and Digital Marquees

When possible, the campaign utilized Livingston ESA RTC member districts’ websites and digital marquees to display banner images and messages reinforcing campaign themes. A series of graphics and messages aligned with the campaign’s key messages, featuring each district’s branding and imagery, was developed and shared with district contacts for local use. Messages and images were intended to be refreshed approximately every two weeks to maintain relevance and avoid message fatigue. While materials were provided to all member districts, implementation varied across districts.



*Above: A sample marquee message.
Right: Sample website banner images.*



A website banner for Livingston Educational Service Agency. The background is blue and purple. The text reads: **Bus Drivers Wanted** and **Up to \$5,000 Sign-On Bonus**. Below this is a bulleted list:

- Health benefits
- Paid training
- Competitive pay
- Full and part-time options

 To the right is a yellow school bus. At the bottom left is the Livingston Educational Service Agency logo, which consists of a stylized 'L' and 'E' in a circle with the text 'Livingston EDUCATIONAL SERVICE Agency'.



A website banner for Howell Public Schools. The background is green and yellow. The text reads: **Bus Drivers Wanted** and **Up to \$5,000 Sign-On Bonus**. Below this is a bulleted list:

- Health benefits
- Paid training
- Competitive pay
- Full and part-time options

 To the right is a yellow school bus. At the bottom left is the Howell Public Schools logo, a large yellow 'H' with 'HOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS' written below it.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPLEMENTAL

Cross-District Implementation Coordination

To ensure effective implementation of the campaign plan, the communications team met weekly with Livingston ESA RTC transportation directors and district contacts. These meetings provided opportunities to share campaign updates and review progress, including interest form completions, hiring activity, and training status.

Timeline

Despite limited staffing resources, the campaign timeline enabled the communications team to maintain consistent messaging, sustained visibility, and strong operational alignment throughout the recruitment period.

TACTIC/ACTION	DEADLINE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Identify current bus drivers for video series	May 23	RTC Transportation Directors
Film bus drivers for video series	Jun 4	Video firm, HC, LC
Develop social media posts and calendar	Jun 6	HC
Develop social media graphics	Jun 6	LC
Develop web banner graphics	Jun 6	T Gould
Develop marquee messages	Jun 6	HC, LC
Design and order new banners	Jun 6	LC
Develop press release for try-it-out day	Jun 6	HC
Launch marquee messages	Jun 9	Districts
Launch web banner graphics	Jun 9	Districts
Issue press release for try-it-out day	Jun 9	HC
Develop print, digital, and radio ads	Jun 13	HC, LC, Beasley Media
Develop calendar of community events	Jun 13	Districts
Develop flyer for various locations	Jun 13	LC
Launch social media messages	Jun 16	Districts
Launch ads	Jun 16	Districts
Host Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day	Jun 25	Districts, Transportation Directors, HC
Launch video series	Jun 26	Districts
Community Events	Jun 27	Districts, Transportation Directors
Information at back-to-school events	August	Districts
Information in Backpacks for Kids packets	Aug 6	LC

**HC represents the Howell Communications Team, and LC represents the Livingston ESA Communications Team.*

EVALUATION SUPPLEMENTAL

Staffing Outcomes

The primary measure of success for the campaign was whether the campaign’s objective, “By the first day of the 2025–26 school year, Livingston ESA RTC member districts will have fully staffed Transportation Departments, allowing each district to effectively and consistently provide transportation services” was met.

While each Livingston ESA RTC member district faced different levels of need, all experienced driver shortages prior to the campaign. Between June and August 2025, staffing increased across all five member districts. In total, 30 drivers were hired, representing significant progress toward stabilizing transportation services across the cooperative.

With the 30 drivers hired, the campaign eliminated transportation vacancies across Livingston ESA RTC member districts, allowing districts to begin the 2025–26 school year with the strongest staffing levels in several years. Each district employed sufficient staff for a fully staffed department. However, because some staff members were still in training or in the human resources process, not every department had all drivers in place at the start of the school year.

RECRUITMENT RESULTS BY DISTRICT

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF INTERESTED	NUMBER HIRED
Brighton	18	4
Hartland	14	2
Howell	39	8
Livingston ESA	16	9
Pinckney	4	7
Undecided	4	—
TOTAL	95	30

Social Media and Video Performance

A coordinated social media calendar was implemented across four member districts to maximize reach and maintain consistent messaging. One member district did not implement the social media calendar.

Across Facebook and Instagram, 72 recruitment posts were shared, generating 2,114 likes, 219 shares, 27 comments, and 2,359 total engagements. While detailed analytics were not available for each member district that implemented the social media calendar, industry benchmarks suggest these posts likely generated between 60,000 and 120,000 impressions.

Shares played a particularly important role in expanding the campaign’s reach beyond district-owned audiences and into broader community networks.


72
recruitment posts shared


2,113
likes generated


27
comments received


219
shares recorded

 **YouTube Video Series**

139-410
views per video


~600
video engagements on social media

EVALUATION SUPPLEMENTAL

A video storytelling series was developed to highlight the benefits of a bus driving career and reinforce campaign messaging. Five themed videos were produced and distributed across multiple platforms. YouTube performance ranged from 139 to 410 views per video. While individual view counts were modest on the hosting site, on social media nearly 600 engagements were generated by video posts. Instagram generated the highest number of likes, while Facebook produced more shares, demonstrating complementary strengths between platforms.

Paid Advertising

Paid advertising was designed to achieve message saturation across Livingston County and surrounding areas through a combination of display, streaming audio, video, and outdoor advertising. Display advertising generated more than 2.9 million impressions across the target area. Streaming audio advertising delivered over 117 million impressions with a 98.5% completion rate, indicating that the vast majority of listeners heard the full recruitment message. The YouTube pre-roll campaign generated 121,095 impressions, a 61.98% completion rate, and more than 79,000 full video views, ensuring strong exposure to the recruitment message. Outdoor advertising further expanded visibility, generating more than 102,000 billboard impressions and reaching drivers across multiple area freeways. Together, these efforts created sustained, high-frequency exposure and reinforced message recall throughout the summer recruitment period.

In-Person Events

In-person events supported the recruitment of new drivers while also demonstrating to families in Livingston ESA RTC member districts that each district was actively working to address bus driver shortages. This visibility helped generate interest form submissions and increased awareness and understanding of the need for additional bus drivers.

The Bus Driver Try-it-Out Day attracted 10 attendees and generated 9 completed interest forms, representing a 350% increase in attendance compared to the previous Try-it-Out Day event.

Additionally, space at six community events helped support the campaign. At each event, flyers and promotional items, including bus shaped stress reliever giveaways, were distributed to increase awareness and encourage interest in bus driving positions. Following each event, there was an increase in interest form completions. Informal feedback from events also showed that families in Livingston ESA RTC member districts acknowledged the increased efforts to recruit new bus drivers.

In-person events proved to be a cost-effective way to recruit candidates and demonstrate the Livingston ESA RTC's commitment to addressing transportation challenges.

Lessons Learned & Future Recommendations

While the campaign successfully achieved its goal and significantly reduced the critical bus driver shortage across Livingston ESA RTC member districts, the evaluation confirmed that transportation staffing requires ongoing attention. Staffing levels can shift quickly due to retirements, resignations, and substitute coverage needs, making sustained recruitment efforts essential to maintaining reliable transportation services. To support long-term staffing stability, Livingston ESA RTC should maintain a year-round recruitment

EVALUATION SUPPLEMENTAL

and awareness effort. A smaller-scale campaign during the school year would help maintain visibility and preserve a pipeline of prospective drivers.

Maintaining competitive incentives will remain critical. The sign-on bonus structure introduced during this campaign proved effective and should be continued or adjusted as needed to remain competitive within the regional labor market.

Future large-scale recruitment campaigns should begin earlier in the calendar year. Planning for the 2026 summer recruitment effort should begin in February, with a coordinated launch in mid-April. This timeline would allow sufficient time for hiring and training before the start of the school year and reduce the risk of service disruptions.

The Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day proved to be a valuable recruitment tool and should be expanded. Because attendees were primarily interested in northern RTC districts, hosting at least two events, including one in the southern portion of the service area, would expand geographic reach and increase the candidate pool. Incorporating a live radio remote broadcast from the Bus Driver Try-It-Out Day into the paid advertising strategy could increase event awareness and drive additional attendance.

Evaluation also identified opportunities to strengthen the BeABusDriver.org webpage. Improving referral tracking and updating the “How did you hear about us?” options to include all campaign channels will allow more accurate attribution and better-informed resource allocation.

The communications team identified a need to engage Transportation Directors and local district contacts earlier in the process. While the plan was presented to superintendents, school business officials, and the Livingston ESA RTC Executive Director, campaign details did not initially reach all Transportation Directors, leading to early confusion about activities and responsibilities. Presenting the plan to Transportation Directors and local district contacts before the launch, along with continuing weekly check-in meetings, will strengthen future coordination.

The final area for improvement was the need to include staff time in the campaign budget. While each district identified a local contact, the bulk of the work was completed by the Howell and Livingston ESA communications teams. Accounting for staff time would allow measurable tracking of staff expenses incurred by Howell and Livingston ESA and could potentially provide an opportunity for those districts to recoup costs from the remaining RTC member districts.

Together, these recommendations provide a framework for sustaining and improving recruitment momentum in Livingston ESA RTC member districts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CAMPAIGNS



1. LAUNCH EARLIER

- Begin planning in February
- Launch campaign in mid-April
- Allow more time for hiring & training



2. EXPAND TRY-IT-OUT EVENTS

- Host at least two events
- Add southern coverage area location
- Increase geographic access



3. STRENGTHEN TRACKING

- Improve BeABusDriver.org webpage
- Update referral source questions
- Enable accurate attribution



4. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS EARLY

- Present plan to Transportation Directors
- Include local district contacts
- Continue weekly check-in meetings