



# How To Evaluate Shuttle Bus Service Providers

Top criteria to consider to help you choose the best provider for your organization





This paper is brought to you by DPV Transportation Worldwide, a leading, minority-owned provider of premium shuttle bus services throughout the U.S. This paper provides you with a high-level overview of the key factors to consider as you evaluate shuttle bus service providers – to help you select the best provider for your organization.

Shuttle bus services are mission-critical to your operation and there are many factors to consider. It's imperative to hear more than a sales pitch, but for the provider to be able to back it up with facts, to give you the confidence you need that you are making the right decision. In this paper, we will review the top ten characteristics to seek in a shuttle bus service provider, based on our experience, and feedback from hundreds of clients.

Following are ten of the most critical factors we hear again and again from our clients, along with some supporting details. If you have questions, or wish to dig deeper, we invite you to visit us at [www.dpvtransportation.com](http://www.dpvtransportation.com).

**New York Branch**  
677 Nepperhand Ave,  
Yonkers  
New York 10703

**Headquarters**  
383 Second St, Everett  
Massachusetts 02149  
**Ph** +1 (877) 378-4445  
**Fax** +1 (617) 567-5820

**Connecticut Branch**  
18 George St,  
East Hartford  
Connecticut 06108



# **The **Top 10** Characteristics to Seek in a Shuttle Bus Service Provider**

# 1

## Superior Customer Service

Sometimes customer service is treated as an afterthought by decision makers, however their approach to customer service is essential on two fronts:

1. The service provided directly to passengers and,
2. The service provided to those responsible for shuttle bus services within your organization. Here are some key considerations as you evaluate providers.

### Passenger Customer Service

- Will the provider use chauffeurs who are dedicated to your account?
- Are the chauffeurs employees of the company, rather than contract drivers?
- Do all drivers receive customer service training and how often?
- How are the chauffeurs supervised, and is it on a daily basis?
- Does the provider monitor its overall customer service performance and, if so, how?
- How is chauffeur performance measured? Do they conduct a "ghost rider" program or random spot checks?
- Does the provider employ passenger surveys, and are they shared with you?
- Does the provider have a mobile app with rating capabilities to ensure mutual transparency for the passenger, the provider and, most importantly, to the person in charge of your shuttle operations?
- Do they maintain a current customer service performance rating based on formal surveys and can they share this with you?

### Organizational Customer Service

- Does the provider have a customer service center? How does the provider monitor, evaluate and report on calls to the service center?
- Will the provider furnish an account manager dedicated to your program? Is the account manager available 24/7?
- Do they provide one single point of managerial contact, and is this available 24/7?
- Do they provide a custom service-level agreement (SLA) to meet your unique requirements? How often do they review the SLA with your team to make necessary adjustments?

## 2

# High-Quality, Modern Vehicles

It all begins with the ride. You want your passengers to ride safely and in comfort, which is why it's essential for your provider to use modern vehicles with newer equipment, safety features and amenities. Here are some key criteria to consider.

- The provider owns their entire fleet of vehicles, which helps to ensure that vehicles are high quality and well maintained. You do not want your provider to lease their vehicles from others.
- You want to make sure that they are late-model vehicles. Ask about the age of the vehicles that the provider plans to use. A good rule of thumb is that no vehicle exceeds three years of age, to ensure that they are in optimal condition, comfortable and safe.
- As you evaluate providers' prices, keep in mind the age and the quality of the vehicles in relation to the price. This will help you compare "apples-to-apples" as it relates to pricing. It's not the same for a provider to be price competitive with vehicles that are older and have high mileage as a provider that offers modern, low-mileage vehicles. It's important to consider vehicle quality and passenger experience as you evaluate price.
- You want your passengers to ride in comfort, so be sure to ask the provider about special features, such as entertainment systems, leather seating, premium sound and Wi-Fi.
- Ask the provider to supply you with a detailed inventory of the vehicles they plan to use and be sure that they include a spare vehicle in your program.
- It's absolutely critical that your provider's vehicles are well maintained. Ask the provider about their maintenance schedule and how they monitor vehicle health. Top providers should perform thorough vehicle inspections daily for cleanliness, functionality and safety. Be sure to include a minimum daily cleaning requirement in your agreement.
- All vehicles should be climate controlled, free of leaks and provide heat and/or air conditioning appropriate for the weather. All heating and air conditioning equipment should be maintained on a regular basis to provide proper operation and ventilation.
- Make sure that all vehicles are ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant.



### 3 Live Mobile Tracking App



A key component of great customer service is to give passengers the peace of mind to know when they can expect their shuttle to arrive – and this is where the provider’s mobile tracking app comes in.

You should expect your provider to supply, at no charge, a real-time mobile tracking app that enables passengers to easily track where their bus is and when it will arrive. The app should be customized to fit your organization’s brand and be easy for users to get a quick view into where their bus is, how long the wait is, and show the exact location of your shuttles.

Not only should the app serve your passengers, but it should also allow your team to view performance each day, in real time, to track performance and gain insights into your shuttle program. The app should also enable your security team to visually locate any shuttle, any time.

# 4

## Exceptional Safety Record

If there's anything that's non-negotiable, it's the safety record of your provider. As you settle in on a provider, you will want complete confidence that the provider prioritizes the safety and security of our passengers and has a culture of safety. Here are some criteria to keep in mind.

- Be sure that the provider maintains a record that can demonstrate safe operations. You will want to ask them if they maintain safety records, and request that they share these records with you.
- Take the time to check on the provider's safety record with the Department of Transportation (<https://safer.fmcsa.dot.gov/>). If they do not have "Satisfactory" status, which is the highest rating, this should be a red flag.
- It's also beneficial to choose a provider that subscribes to a license monitoring service, so you can be sure that the provider is current on all chauffeurs' driving records. Live license monitoring services continuously monitor driver motor vehicle records across the U.S. and Canada and provide frequent driving record alerts to the provider, which the provider can share with you on a regular basis.
- Does the provider share criminal, TSA and homeland security background checks on its employees, as well as routinely tests its employees for drugs/alcohol – and how often?
- Ask providers about the safety training that they give their chauffeurs. You will want to be sure that each chauffeur is trained extensively on a range of safety procedures.
- Ask if chauffeurs are restricted against engaging in activities that may distract them from safe operation of the vehicle. Examples include listening to radios, use of earbuds, use of cell phone, texting, social media, watching television/movies, or smoking.
- Ensure that each vehicle is equipped with on-board vehicle monitoring systems that provide live data on driving "events" such as hard acceleration, speeding, abrupt stops or accidents, and if the system notifies dispatch in the event of an accident. You will also want each vehicle to be equipped with a video event data recorder to ensure client and driver safety.
- Ask if chauffeurs are equipped with radio or cell phone communications to communicate with their dispatcher and with your organization's designated contact in the event of an emergency or other essential need for contact.

## 5 Professionalism

You will want a provider that uses more than mere “drivers” – you want to use a provider that employs professional chauffeurs. Drivers may do a great job delivering food and goods – but chauffeurs are trained to deliver the professional, safe experience that you want your passengers to have. But how do you gauge professionalism before you start using a provider? Here are some questions to ask.

- Do they use professional, career chauffeurs, rather than part-time contract drivers?
- Do they provide mandatory training for each of their drivers, and what does the training look like?
- Does the provider monitor chauffeur performance each day? What kind of quality control checks do they employ to verify items such as on-time service?
- How does the provider measure passenger satisfaction?
- Are the chauffeurs and other provider employees incentivized based on satisfaction metrics?
- Do chauffeurs adhere to a dress code and what does it entail?

## 6 Punctual

Any provider can boast about being punctual, but how do you truly gauge a provider's punctuality before using them? Here are some questions to ask along with some things to consider.

- Ask the provider if they track on-time performance and, if so, how they track and document it. Ask if they maintain a daily log of arrival and departure times. You will want the provider to demonstrate documented on-time performance in the 90% to 100% range.
- Ask the provider to show you their on-time performance reports and, if they are unable to do so, it is fair to consider this a red flag.
- You can also ask what software or app they use to track and document on-time performance and if you can connect and directly view on-time performance in real time. You may also want to ask to see the tracking software in action.

## 7 Industry Experience

It's always an advantage to select a shuttle bus provider with experience in your industry. There are, very likely, needs and nuances that are specific to your industry and it will be to your advantage to hire a provider who has been there and done that in an environment similar to yours. This will not only ensure that they come up to speed more rapidly, but they will also be able to bring ideas to the table based on their experiences.

- As you speak with potential providers, ask about other clients they have served from within your industry, and ask them to share some of their experiences and key learnings.
- Ask each provider for references.
- You can also ask providers if they have current implementation plans with organizations similar to yours.

## 8 Track Record with Large Customers

If you're a larger organization, it is crucial that your provider has experience providing shuttle services to large organizations. The last thing you want is to be a test case for a smaller operation looking to move into serving larger clients.

### **A provider with experience serving large clients can bring you a range of key benefits:**

- They can be onboarded much faster.
- They have the enterprise-level technologies and systems in place.
- They require less hand holding and less time coming up to speed.
- They can end up costing you less in the long run.

### **Here are some questions to ask.**

- How much experience do you have with 24/7 shuttle operations?
- Have you managed more than 10, 20 or 100 chauffeurs per shift?
- Have you managed programs with 5, 10 or 20+ different routes and schedules?
- Which larger customers do you serve, and can you provide a customer and reference list?
- What kind of logistical support do you provide for large customers?
- What problem resolution policies are in place for large customers?
- What types of backup/emergency services are available for unforeseen events?
- What kind of standard and custom reporting is available?

## 9 Excellent Reputation

You will want to choose a provider that has an impeccable reputation. Here are some tips to help you explore provider reputation.



- Find out how long the company has been in business. The longer a provider has been in business, there's a higher probability that they're doing it right.
- Shuttle services are an entirely different ballgame than traditional transportation services – it's a niche that requires specialized skills and operational competencies. You will want to learn if the company is an established provider of shuttle services, rather than a transportation company offering buses or limos. To get the answer, you can ask providers what percentage of their business is for shuttle bus services.
- Do they have any online reviews? If there are negative reviews, do they seem justified? Have other customers had successful, positive experiences with the companies?
- Find out if the company is financially stable. You don't want to have to change vendors at the last minute because they are about to go out of business.
- Ask the company to provide references and contact information from your industry or from organizations similar to yours.

# 10

## Minority Owned

There are several advantages to working with a certified-MBE (Minority Business Enterprise), and partnerships with them can lead to opportunities that are worth more than a simple dollar amount.

- Working with a certified-MBE delivers economic opportunity for disadvantaged communities while fostering entrepreneurship in minority groups.
- Diversity is highly valuable and having a business relationship with a certified-MBE shows that your business recognizes the value in diversity, and that you support minority communities.
- By working with an MBE, your organization gains access to several tax benefits. The U.S. government offers numerous federal and state tax incentives, tax breaks, and potential rebates to those who conduct business with certified-MBEs.
- Partnering with a certified-MBE helps you expand your client base to a larger demographic. If your organization is looking to do more business with a specific ethnic group, an MBE partner can help you open the door.



# We invite you to learn more.

There is a great deal to consider, and we've just skimmed the surface.

To dig deeper, we invite you to contact us at DPV Transportation Worldwide to speak with a shuttle bus consultant. We would be happy to help you understand all the different factors to consider, and help you design a shuttle bus program that meets the needs of your constituencies, and your organization.

**To schedule a consultation with a DPV Worldwide shuttle bus consultant, please click [here](#).**

Or you may contact us via the methods below:

Phone: **1.877.378.4445**

Email: **[bill.licata@dpvtransportation.com](mailto:bill.licata@dpvtransportation.com)**



# Shuttle Bus Provider Evaluation Checklist

Key criteria to consider when evaluating shuttle bus service providers.  
For more information, please visit [www.dpvtransportation.com](http://www.dpvtransportation.com)

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Company	Yes	No	Comments
Certified Minority Business Enterprise			
Shuttle bus focus			
Online reviews			
Financial Stability			
Experience	Yes	No	Comments
Years in shuttle business			
Proven record of industry-specific contracts			
Proven record of large client contracts			
Client references			
24/7 shuttle experience			
20+chauffeurs per shift experience			
10+ routes experience			
Transparent financial reports			
Vehicles	Yes	No	Comments
Vehicles below five years old			
Daily vehicle cleaning			
Daily technical and safety inspection			
Weekly technical maintenance			
ADA compliant vehicle			
Climate control			
Air ride suspension			





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Premium Features	Yes	No	Comments
Wi-Fi system			
Premium entertainment			
Leather seats			
Flip or foldaway seating			
Carpeting			
Power supply			
USB connectors per passenger			
Adjustable lighting/lamp for each seat			
Food tray and cup holder for each seat			
Foot rest per seat			
Coat hangers			
Adjustable curtains on passenger windows			
GPS navigation display			
Visible clock			
Chauffeurs and Staff	Yes	No	Comments
Professionally trained chauffeurs			
Chauffeurs employed by provider			
Chauffeurs dedicated to account			
Mandatory uniforms			
Mandatory training			
Mandatory customer service training			





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Chauffeurs and Staff	Yes	No	Comments
Ongoing refresher training			
Supervision program with SLA in place			
Punctuality	Yes	No	Comments
24/7 Dispatcher			
On-time performance reports			
90%+ on-time performance			
Live mobile tracking app			
Customer Service	Yes	No	Comments
Dedicated account manager			
Complimentary live mobile tracking app			
Custom service level agreement (SLA)			
Customer service center			
24/7 customer support			
Ticketing system			
Multi-lingual customer service			
Passenger and customer surveys			
'Ghost rider' program in place			
Problem resolution policy			
Back-up/emergency services			





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Safety and Security	Yes	No	Comments
Transparent safety record			
Mandatory safety trainings			
On-board vehicle monitoring systems			
Chauffeurs equipped with radio or cell phone			
Chauffeur background check			
Chauffeur policy for restricted activities			

## New York Branch

677 Nepperhand Ave,  
Yonkers  
New York 10703

## Headquarters

383 Second St, Everett  
Massachusetts 02149  
**Ph** +1 (877) 378-4445  
**Fax** +1 (617) 567-5820

