

Secretary Xavier Becerra
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Dear Secretary Becerra,

We are writing on behalf of the Transit Advisory Board of Albuquerque, a citizen advisory board concerned with helping ABQRide provide safe, accessible, reliable, and sustainable public transportation to the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Please expedite the lab certification process for Oral Fluid Drug Testing to help address the shortage of bus drivers in the country and enable our agency to retain and hire more operators and mechanics.

Many transit systems across the country, including ABQ Ride, are suffering from a severe operator shortage. The loss of operators and mechanics, and the inability to hire enough replacements, has made it impossible to restore service to pre-pandemic levels let alone improve service to address the needs of the community.

Numerous states across the U.S. have legalized medical and recreational cannabis, or will do so soon. To accommodate this cultural shift, we must ensure that operators are not impaired while they are in charge of a bus or train while not infringing on their legal use of cannabis on their own free time.

We applaud the USDOT's new rule allowing the use of Oral Fluid Drug Testing, which detects cannabis use in the last 72 hours or less. While this is still not a sobriety test, it is much closer and much fairer than the Urine Test which can detect cannabis use for as much as 30 days.

An added benefit is that Oral Fluid Drug testing is much less invasive than the Urine Test and so will be required for anyone who identifies as Transgender or Non-Binary.

But, to fully implement this exciting rule change, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) must certify at least 2 laboratories so that employers across the country can use and get the results of the Oral Fluid Drug tests.

A strong, reliable public transportation system requires the cooperation of many. We need action to alleviate one of the impediments to hiring and retaining employees. I'm hoping that you will hear our concern **and move as quickly as possible certify at least two labs for Oral Fluid Drug Testing to help us attract and retain new bus operators while keeping passengers safe.**

Thank you,

The Transit Advisory Board of the City of Albuquerque