

Transport Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Transport Manager interviews test how you balance service, cost and compliance when they pull against each other. Expect the panel to probe your scheduling judgement, your knowledge of fatigue and chain of responsibility rules, and how you handle the commercial pressure of a late load or an over budget month.

- **Process:** How you build rosters, plan routes and sequence work when drivers, vehicles and customer windows all have limits.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of managing driver performance, resolving customer complaints or turning around a cost problem.
- **Scenario:** A breakdown, a sick driver or a missed delivery window, used to see how you prioritise under pressure.
- **Compliance and technical:** Questions on fatigue management, mass limits, chain of responsibility and what records you keep.
- **Commercial:** How you read a budget, explain a variance and decide what to change when costs run over.

A typical process starts with a phone screen with a recruiter or hiring manager covering your background and availability. The main interview is usually with the operations or logistics lead, sometimes alongside a safety or compliance manager and a senior manager. Some employers ask you to work through a small exercise, such as building a roster or reviewing a cost report, before a final conversation about salary, notice and start date.

1. Walk me through how you would build a driver roster for a week when two drivers call in sick and a major customer needs an earlier delivery window.

Why they ask

This is the core of the job, and the panel wants to hear how you juggle service, rest rules and cost rather than just listing steps.

How to structure your answer

A process walk through. Set out your starting information, the constraints you check first, the options you consider, and the trade offs you would explain to the customer and the team.

Example answer

"First I would check the customer's real deadline and whether the earlier window can be met without breaching anyone's rest. Then I would look at the roster to see who is available, who has the right licence and who has hours left in their fatigue block. If I cannot cover the earlier run with an existing driver, I would call in a relief driver or use an approved subcontractor rather than push someone past their limit. I would re sequence the remaining runs by priority, tell the customer what I can commit to, and let the drivers know the changes before they start. I would also log the reason for the changes so the next roster review picks up the pattern."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a driver who was consistently missing delivery windows.

Why they ask

Driver performance sits at the heart of transport management, and the panel wants to see whether you deal with it fairly and with evidence.

How to structure your answer

STAR. Situation, Task, Action, Result. Keep the result focused on what changed for the driver, the customer and the schedule.

Example answer

"We had a driver on a metro run who was arriving late three or four times a week. I sat down with him and went through the telematics and run sheets rather than starting with a warning. It turned out the loading dock was holding him up at his first stop and he was trying to make up time on the road, which was unsafe. I changed his start time and spoke to the dock about staging his load earlier. His on time arrivals improved within a fortnight, and the conversations we had about fatigue and speed made the safety expectations clearer for the whole team."

3. A prime mover breaks down 200 kilometres from the depot with a full load due at a customer site the next morning. What do you do?

Why they ask

Breakdowns are a regular test of judgement, and the interviewer wants to see your priorities before your logistics knowledge.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure. Start with safety and the driver, then recovery options, then customer communication, then the review after the event.

Example answer

"First I check the driver is safe, parked legally and has support if the breakdown is on a highway. Then I call the workshop or roadside provider to get a diagnosis. If the repair will take hours, I look at whether a nearby depot or subcontractor can take the trailer, or whether another company vehicle can meet the load and swap it. I call the customer as soon as I know the delay is real, give them a realistic new time and keep them updated rather than going quiet. The next day I review why the vehicle failed and whether our maintenance schedule or pre start checks need to change."

4. How do you keep a fleet compliant with fatigue management and chain of responsibility obligations across a busy roster?

Why they ask

This is the part of the role that carries legal risk, and the panel needs to know you understand the rules and can build them into daily work.

How to structure your answer

Technical framework first, then evidence. Cover the rules you follow, the records you keep, and how you make sure drivers and schedulers actually comply.

Example answer

"I start with the Heavy Vehicle National Law and our accreditation obligations, then build the roster so rest breaks are planned rather than treated as something drivers fit in when they can. Every driver's work diary and fatigue declarations are checked before they start, and I use the transport management system to flag when someone is close to their limit. I also make sure the schedulers understand chain of responsibility, because a roster that cannot be driven legally is the manager's problem, not the driver's. We keep audit ready records, and I review incidents at the weekly operations meeting so patterns do not become normal."

5. You review the monthly figures and fuel and maintenance are over budget by ten per cent. How do you respond?

Why they ask

The role owns the budget, so the interviewer wants to see commercial thinking and not just cost cutting for its own sake.

How to structure your answer

Commercial analysis. Break the variance into causes, decide what is controllable, set actions and a review point, then explain how you would report it.

Example answer

"I would break the overspend down by vehicle and route before doing anything else. Fuel can be higher because of price, poor route planning, excessive idling or one vehicle running inefficiently, and maintenance can spike from a major repair or from skipped servicing. I would compare the figures to the budget assumptions and the previous month, then decide what is a one off and what is a trend. If route planning is the cause, I would change the schedules; if it is a vehicle, I would get it assessed. I would report the variance honestly to my manager with the actions and a revised forecast, rather than waiting for the quarter to end."

6. Describe how you would handle a customer who calls because a delivery is running six hours late.

Why they ask

Customer service pressure is constant in transport, and the panel wants to see how you protect the relationship while still managing the fleet.

How to structure your answer

Client facing service recovery. Acknowledge, investigate, commit to an action, then follow up and close the loop internally.

Example answer

"I would take the call myself rather than leave it with despatch. I would acknowledge the delay, find out what the customer needs from the load, and check the vehicle's actual position and the driver's remaining hours before promising a new time. If the freight is critical, I would look at a part load or a courier for the urgent items. I would give the customer a realistic window and call them again if it changes. After delivery I would follow up to confirm the impact and review why it happened, because a late run that is explained honestly is easier to recover than one the customer hears about from their own site."