



The Drive-Time and Route Density Guide

Windshield time is invisible on a schedule and expensive in practice. This guide measures exactly how much of a full week is drive time, and what a tighter route buys back.

A schedule shows service hours, not drive time between stops, which makes drive time the easiest real cost to lose track of. It does not appear as a line item anywhere, but it eats directly into how many properties a crew can actually service in a week.

What "hours per stop" is really made of

Every stop takes the service time itself plus the drive time to get there and back to the route. A 45-minute service call with a 20-minute average round-trip drive is really 65 minutes of committed time, about 1.08 hours, not 45 minutes. That gap between service time and total committed time is the drive-time burden.

A worked example

A 5-day, 8-hour week gives 40 available hours. At 45 minutes of service plus 20 minutes of drive time per stop (1.083 hours per stop), that week fits 36 stops. Of the time actually spent, 27 hours are billable service and 12 hours are drive time, meaning drive time eats up 30.8% of every committed hour, nearly a third of the working week, not doing billable work.

What tightening the route buys back

Cut average round-trip drive time from 20 minutes to 10 (denser routing, fewer far-flung stops), and hours per stop drops to 0.917. The same 40-hour week now fits 43 stops instead of 36, seven more, without adding a single labor hour or working a minute later.

That is the real payoff of route density: it is not a productivity trick, it is recovering hours that were already being spent on the road instead of on a lawn.

Key takeaway. Drive time is invisible on a calendar but very visible in stop count. Tightening a route recovers real capacity for free, no extra labor hours required.

Assumptions

- The worked example uses a 45-minute average service call and a 20-minute average round-trip drive, both illustrative.

Frequently asked questions

Is 30% drive time normal?

It depends entirely on service radius and route planning. Dense urban or suburban routes can run well under 20%, spread-out rural routes can run well over 30%. There is no universal target, the point is measuring your own number rather than assuming it away.

Does tightening a route mean turning away customers?

Not necessarily, it usually means grouping stops by proximity when scheduling, or being more selective about accepting far-out properties relative to the existing route. Property Profitability Ranking is a good next step for identifying which existing stops are dragging drive time up the most.

Why does Weekly Route Capacity use the same math as this guide?

Because hours-per-stop, service time plus drive time, is the shared unit both engines are built on. This guide isolates the drive-time half of that number so it is visible on its own, rather than buried inside a single stop-capacity figure.

What if drive time varies a lot stop to stop?

Use your own honest average rather than a best-case or worst-case estimate, the goal is a realistic weekly picture, not a single best day. If drive time varies enough to matter, consider running the numbers for a tight cluster of stops separately from a spread-out one.

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