



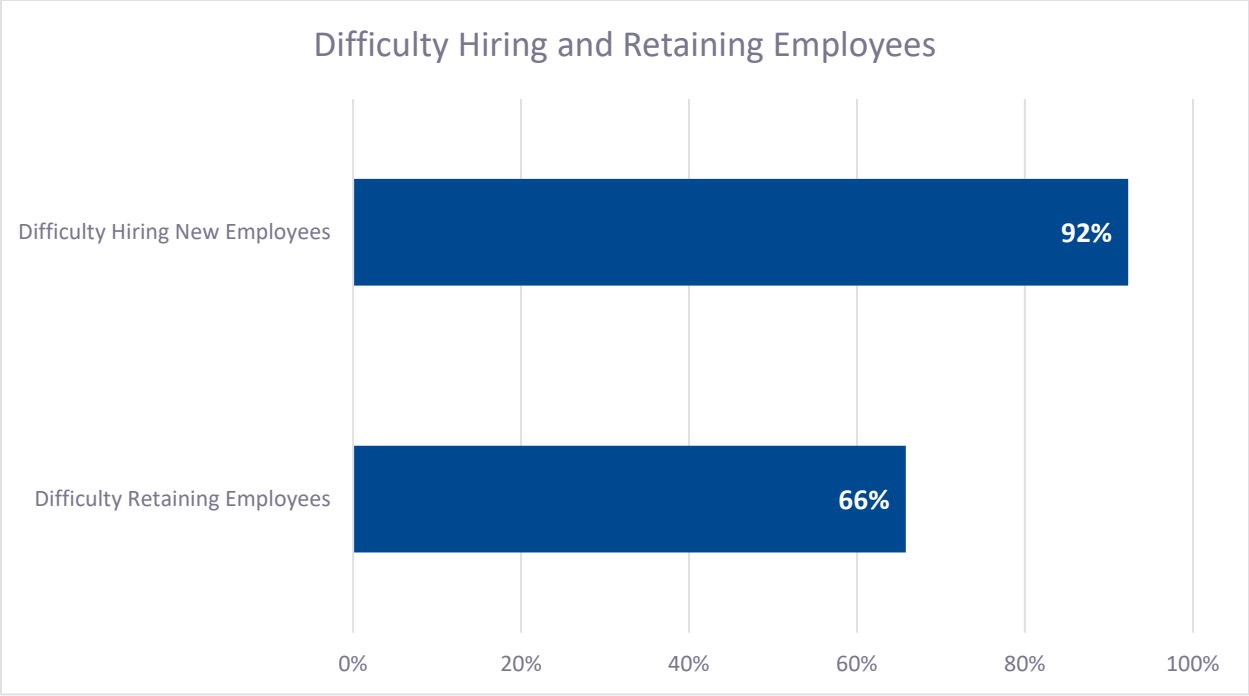
Workforce Shortages Impacting Public Transportation Recovery

Key Takeaways

1. More than nine in ten public transit agencies (92 percent) stated that they are having difficulty hiring new employees. Bus operations positions are the most difficult to fill.
2. Almost two-thirds of transit agencies (66 percent) indicated that they are having difficulty retaining employees.
3. Nearly three-in-four transit agencies (71 percent) said that they have either had to cut service or delay service increases because of worker shortage issues.
4. One-half of transit agencies (52 percent) have increased their starting pay in response to worker shortage issues.
5. More than one-third of agencies (38 percent) have implemented sign-on bonuses, 39 percent have implemented referral bonuses, and 17 percent have implemented retention bonuses.

Overwhelming Majority of Agencies Report Difficulties in Hiring

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted public transportation's workforce, creating shortages at many positions across the industry. While the workforce shortage issue has been on the industry's radar for some time, it has been pushed to new levels in the pandemic recovery period. Nearly all responding agencies (92 percent) indicated that they are having difficulty hiring new employees. Almost two-thirds of agencies (66 percent) indicated they are having difficulty retaining employees. Little difference was observed between larger and smaller agencies in terms of the difficulty of hiring and retaining employees.



Positions Most Difficult to Fill

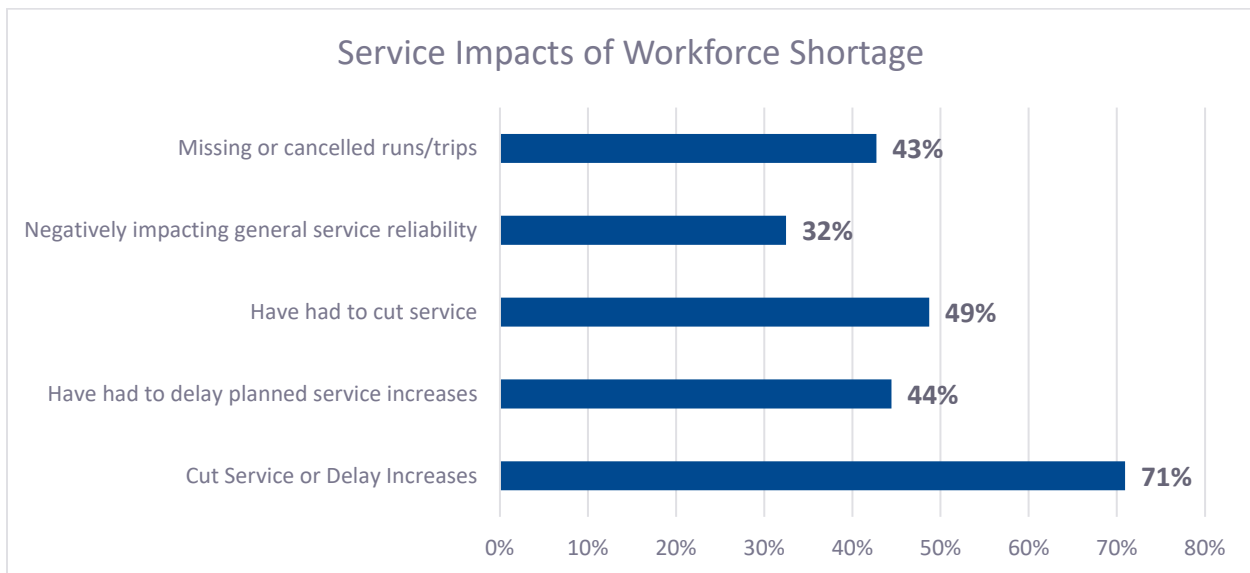
Transit agencies indicated that they have had the most difficulty filling bus operations and bus maintenance positions. Nearly three-in-four agencies (74 percent) ranked bus operations as the most difficult position to fill, and another 20 percent ranked it as the second most difficult position to fill. Transit agencies ranked bus maintenance positions as the second most difficult position to fill, with 20 percent of agencies ranking bus maintenance positions as the most difficult position to fill and 53 percent ranking them as the second most difficult position to fill.

Most Difficult Positions to Fill—Ranking	
Position Type	Average Rank
Bus Operations	1.3
Bus Maintenance	2.1
Supervisory/Mid-Management	3.4
Rail Operations*	4.1
Rail Maintenance*	4.1
Engineering—Mid- to Senior-Level	4.5
Engineering—Entry Level	5.5
*Ranking among Rail Agencies Only	

Impact of Workforce Shortage

At some public transit agencies, the difficulty attracting and retaining workers is impacting service delivery, planning, and ridership recovery for the industry. Nearly three-in-four agencies (71 percent) said that they have either had to cut service or delay service increases because of worker shortage issues. Four-in-ten agencies (43 percent) indicated that the shortage is leading to missed or cancelled trips; one-third of agencies (32 percent) stated it was having a negative impact on the general reliability of their service.

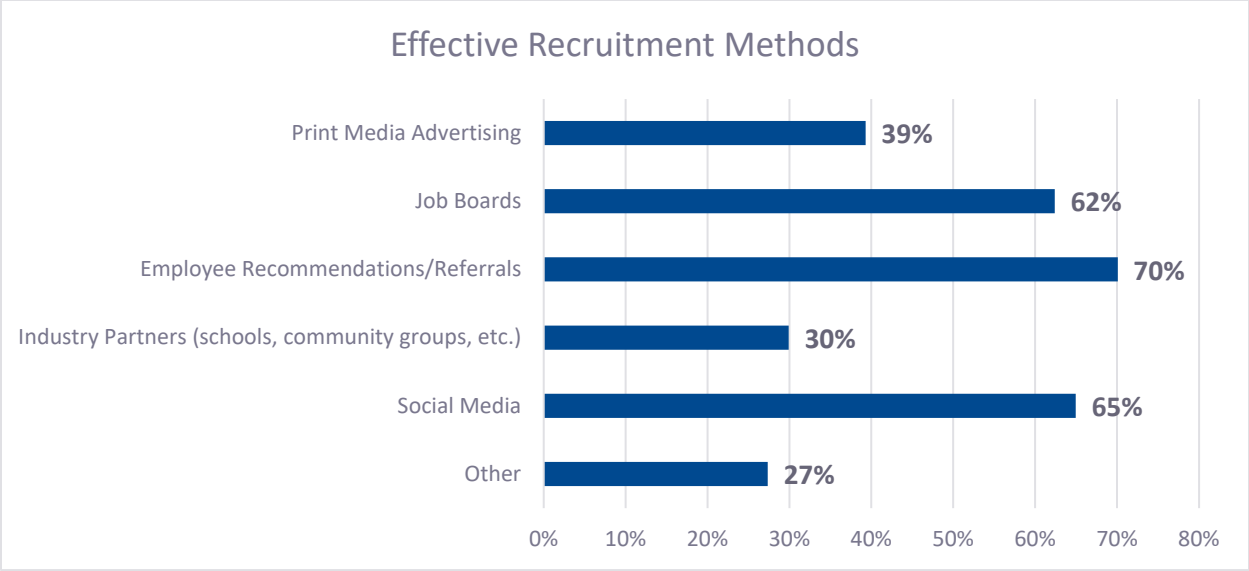
In addition, transit agencies stated that the workforce shortage was having an impact on their longer-term service plans. One-half of agencies (49 percent) indicated that they have had to cut service because of worker shortage issues. Nearly one-half of agencies (44 percent) indicated that they have had to delay planned service increases.



Most Effective Recruitment Methods

We asked responding agencies to indicate which recruiting methods they found to be most effective. Seven-in-ten agencies (70 percent) listed employee recommendations and referrals as one of their most effective methods for recruiting new employees. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) found social media to be an effective recruiting tool, and six-in-ten (62 percent) listed job boards as an effective tool. Other methods volunteered by responding agencies included job fairs and advertising on transit vehicles and buildings.

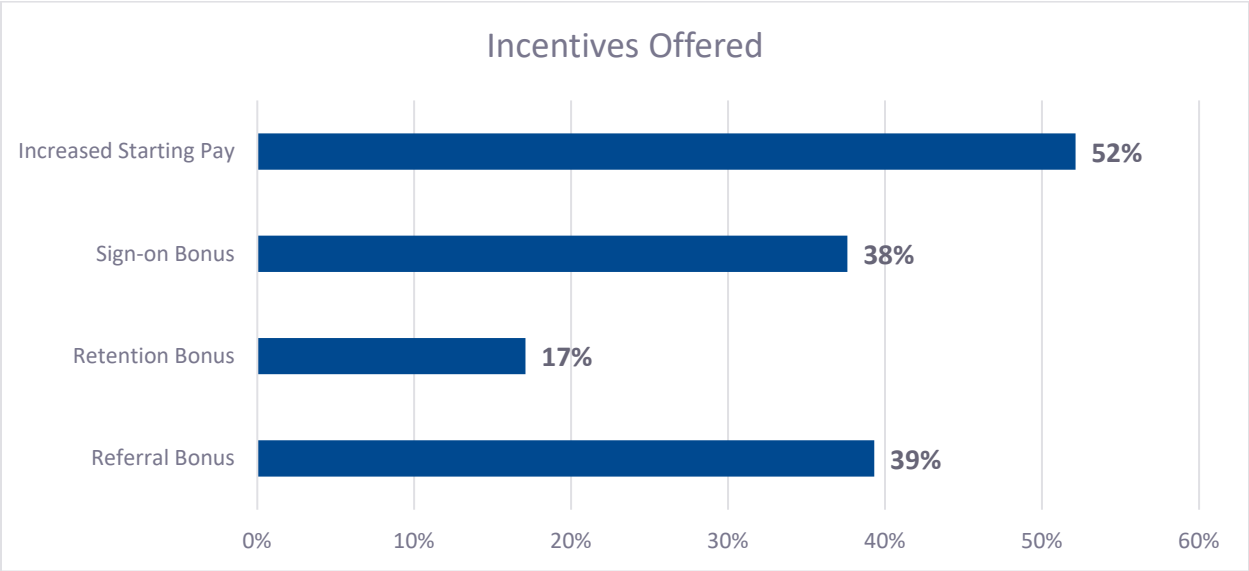
We found differences between larger and smaller agencies in a few of these categories. Larger agencies were more likely to list social media as an effective tool—78 percent of larger agencies compared to 62 percent of smaller agencies. Smaller agencies were more likely to list print media as an effective tool—43 percent of smaller agencies compared to 26 percent of larger agencies.



Incentives Offered

To increase hiring and retention, some agencies have begun offering incentives. One-half of responding agencies (52 percent) have increased starting pay. More than one-third of agencies (38 percent) have implemented sign-on bonuses, and 39 percent have implemented referral bonuses.

There are also differences between larger and smaller agencies in terms of which incentives they have decided to offer. Smaller agencies are more likely to have increased starting pay, with 54 percent of them doing so compared to 43 percent of larger agencies. Larger agencies were more likely to have implemented sign-on bonuses and referral bonuses, with six-in-ten larger agencies indicating they had implemented each, while only one-third of smaller agencies have done so.



Best Practices

We asked transit agencies to discuss some of the practices they have found to be most effective in increasing hiring and retention. Some of the common themes in their responses included:

- Separate tracks for hiring and training operators: one track for candidates with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and one track for prospective employees without a CDL;
- On-site job fairs and hiring events;
- Making hiring fairs a special event with food trucks;
- Extending contingent offers to prospective employees prior to completion of background checks;
- Focusing on recruiting potential employees with customer service backgrounds;
- Streamlining and increasing the speed of recruiting and hiring to move people into jobs quickly; and
- Expanding specific benefits such as student loan payback programs.

About the Survey

APTA conducted this survey of its public transit agency members in February 2022. One hundred and seventeen (117) APTA transit agency members responded to the survey. For purposes of this survey, large agencies are agencies providing more than 15 million passenger trips in FY 2020, and small agencies were those providing less than 15 million trips.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) is a nonprofit international association of 1,500 public- and private-sector organizations which represent a \$80 billion industry that directly employs 448,000 people and supports millions of private-sector jobs. APTA members are engaged in the areas of bus, paratransit, light rail, commuter rail, subways, waterborne services, and intercity and high-speed passenger rail. This includes: transit systems; planning, design, construction, and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; transit associations and state departments of transportation. APTA is the only association in North America that represents all modes of public transportation. APTA members serve the public interest by providing safe, efficient and economical transit services and products

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APTA Vision Statement

APTA leads public transportation in a new mobility era,
advocating to connect and build thriving communities
