American Public Transportation Association

TRANSIT WORKFORCE SHORTAGE STUDY

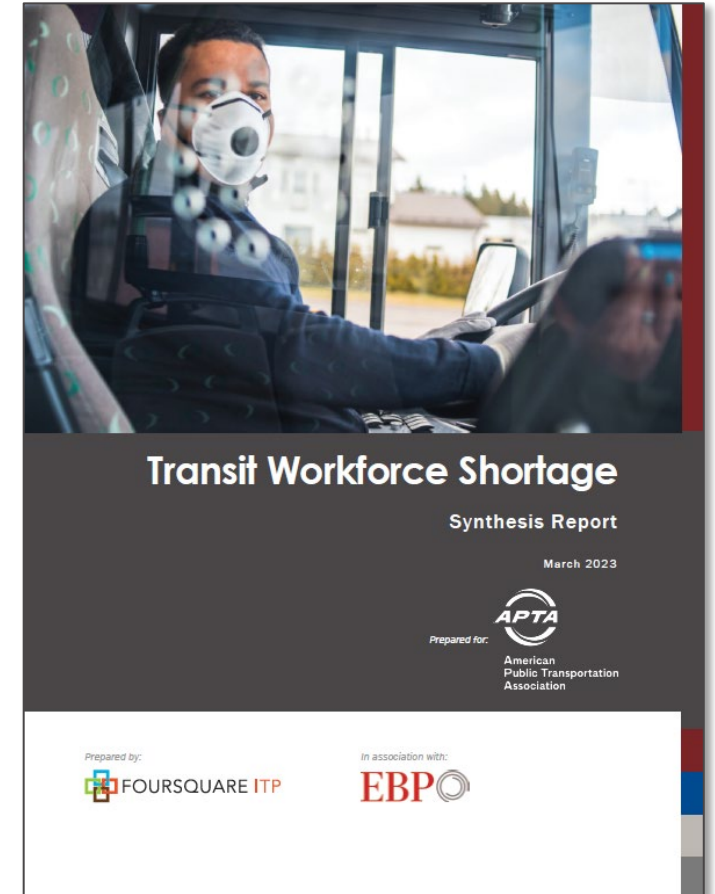## Study Overview

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2. Agencies' and Workers' Views on the Issue
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STUDY OVERVIEW

APTA WORKFORCE SHORTAGE STUDY

- The study aimed to better understand the transit industry workforce shortage's **causes** and provide **best practices for recruiting, hiring, and retaining** transit operations workers.

- Our focus was on **helping agencies learn from one another.**

- Launched last month, the Synthesis Report that includes a Toolkit with agency self-assessment, key metrics, and strategies.

Transit Workforce Shortage

Synthesis Report

March 2023

Prepared for:

APTA
American Public Transportation Association

Prepared by:
FOURSQUARE ITP

In association with:
EBP

RESEARCH APPROACH

- Phase 1
  - Background research and online **survey of 190 agencies**
  - Interim Report

- Phase 2
  - **Interviews** with select agencies and **survey of over 1,300 transit workers**
  - Synthesis Report and Toolkit
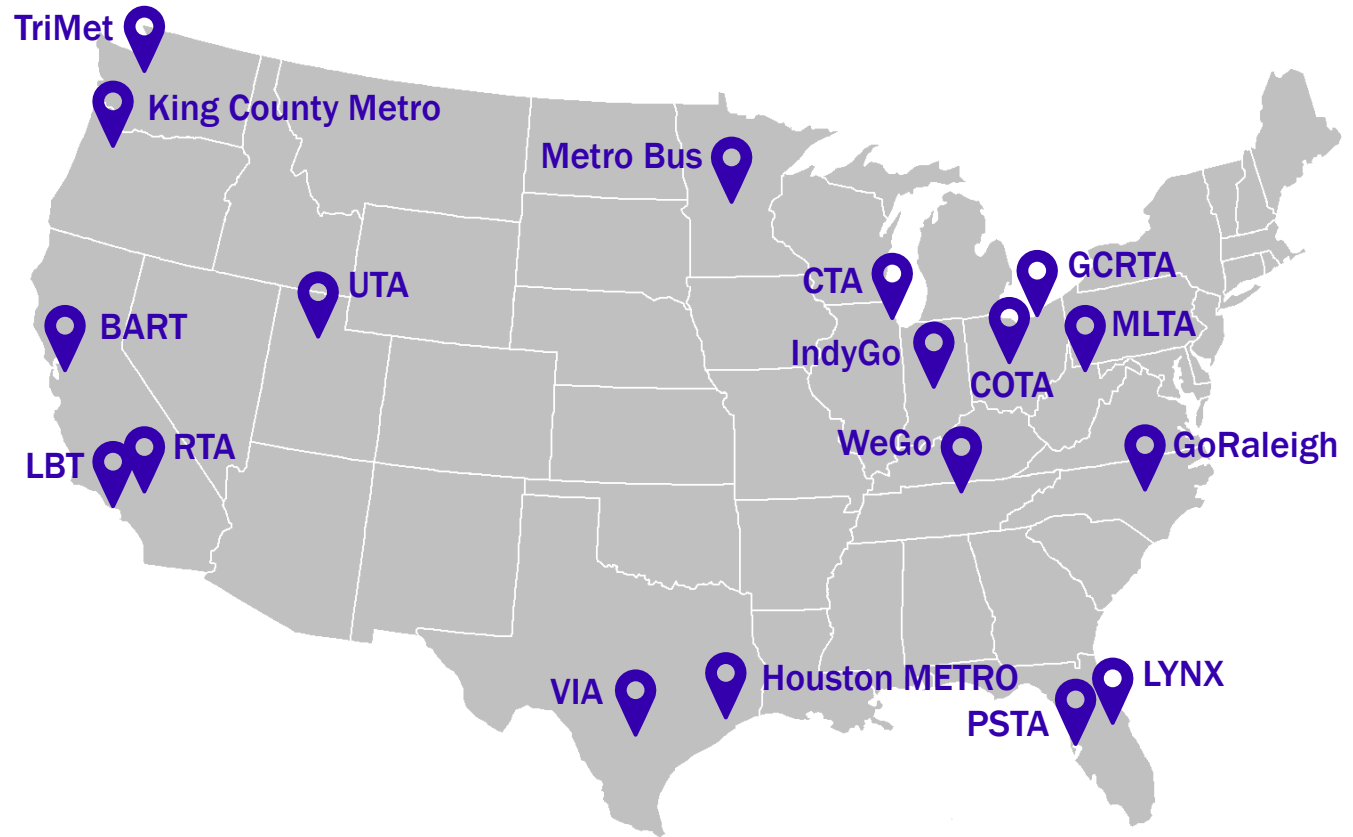
AGENCIES' AND WORKERS' VIEWS ON THE ISSUE

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

- What do agencies know about why workers leave?
  - Reasons, destination, timing
- What difficulties and barriers in attracting, hiring, and retaining workers?
- How satisfied are workers?
- Why are workers leaving or not joining the industry?
- Where are workers heading?

- Key findings include:
  - Workers make **employment decisions based on a complicated mix of factors**.
  - Transit **workers and agency** management **have different understandings of the pressures on** operations **workers**.
  - **Transit workers feel unsupported** by agency staff and management.
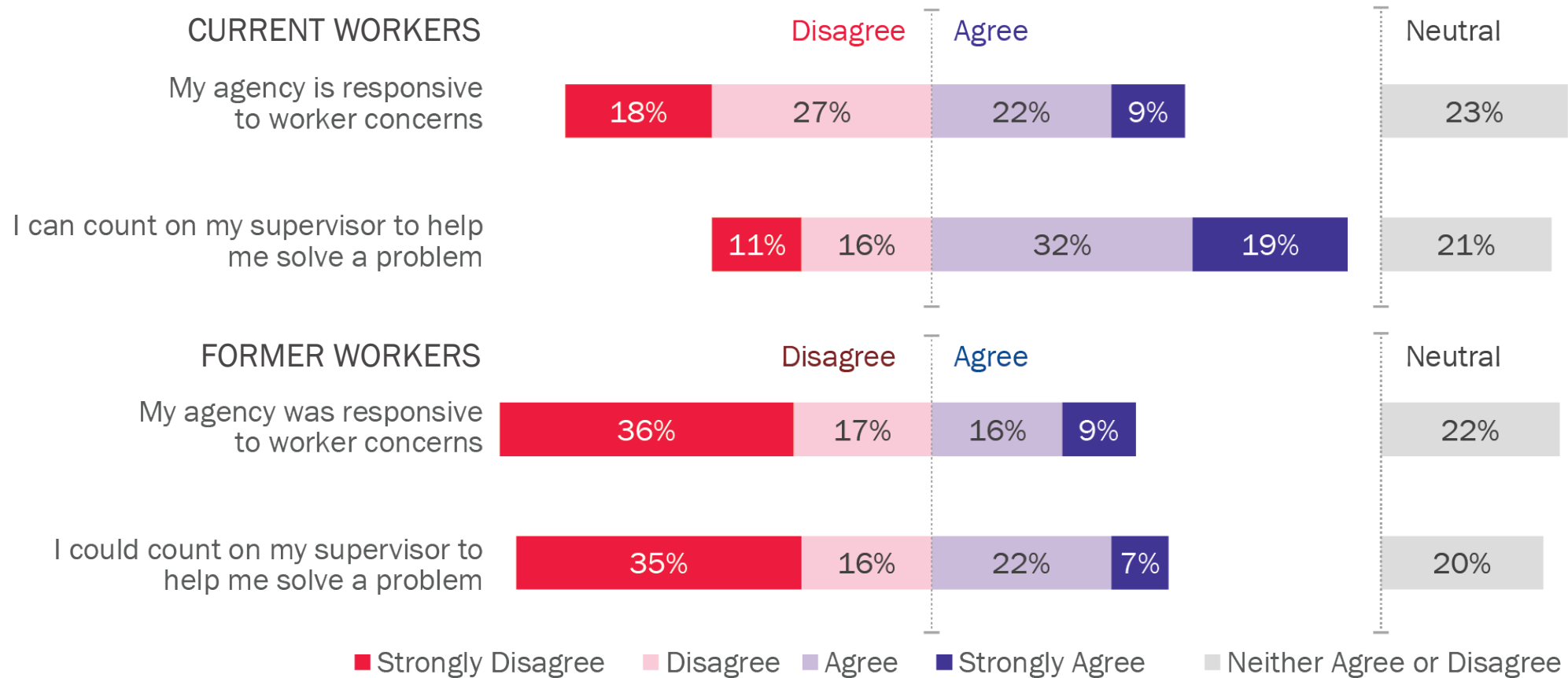
REASONS FOR QUITTING

- **Compensation** and **work schedule** are the leading reasons workers quit

- Agencies, current, and former workers views on **harassment and assault** are significantly distinct

Factor	Agency	Current Worker	Former Worker
Compensation	2.19	2.36	2.57
Work Schedules	2.02	2.63	2.35
Other Working Conditions	3.31	2.97	2.83
On-the Job Harassment or Assault	4.24	3.34	2.94
Concern Over Contracting COVID-19 on the Job	3.24	3.57	4.02

SATISFACTION WITH MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

CURRENT WORKERS

	Disagree	Agree	Neutral

My agency is responsive to worker concerns
- 18% Strongly Disagree
- 27% Disagree
- 22% Agree
- 9% Strongly Agree
- 23% Neutral

I can count on my supervisor to help me solve a problem
- 11% Strongly Disagree
- 16% Disagree
- 32% Agree
- 19% Strongly Agree
- 21% Neutral

FORMER WORKERS

	Disagree	Agree	Neutral

My agency was responsive to worker concerns
- 36% Strongly Disagree
- 17% Disagree
- 16% Agree
- 9% Strongly Agree
- 22% Neutral

I could count on my supervisor to help me solve a problem
- 35% Strongly Disagree
- 16% Disagree
- 22% Agree
- 7% Strongly Agree
- 20% Neutral

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree or Disagree
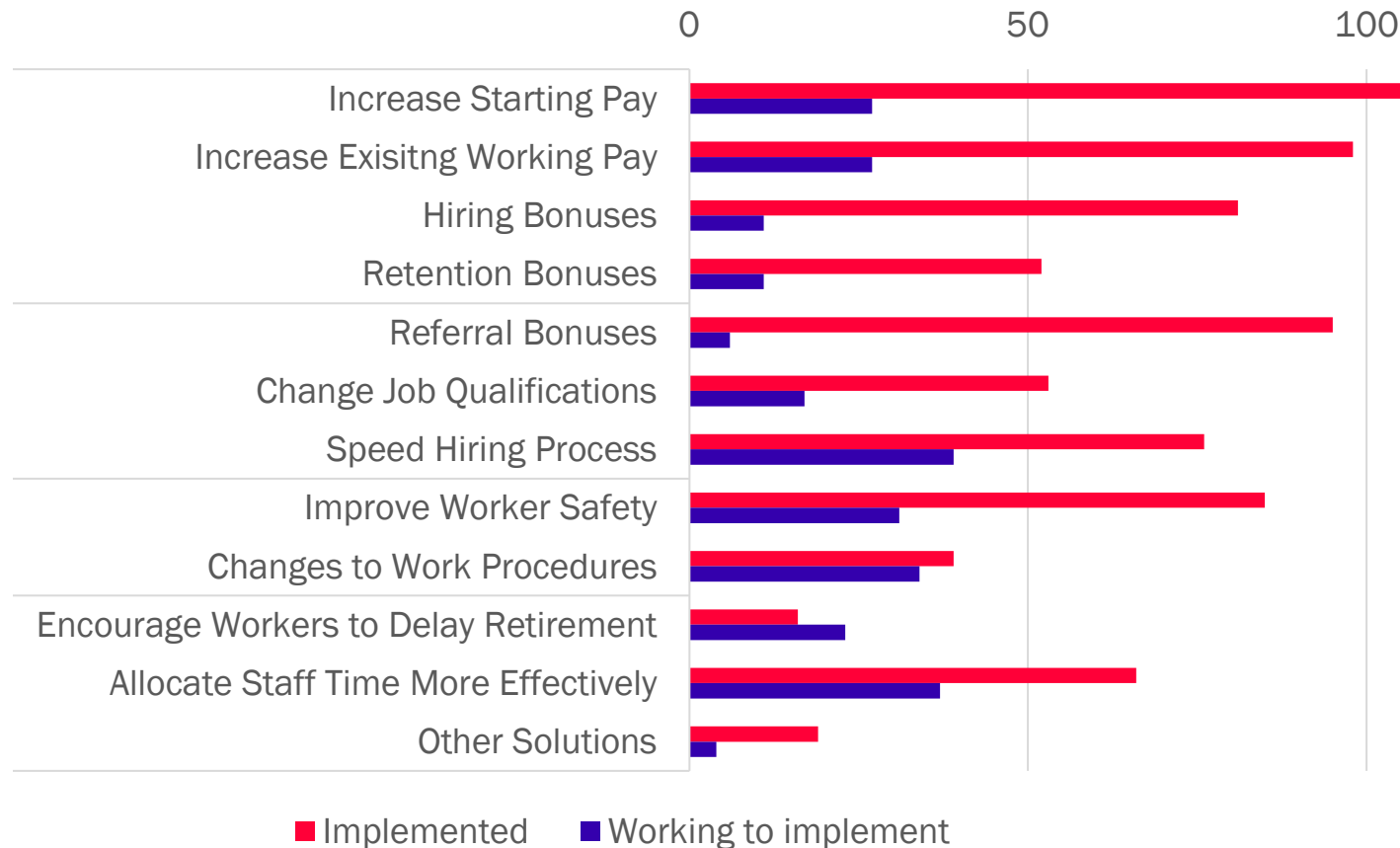
Worker survey points to a perceived lack of responsiveness from agencies, and most former transit workers felt unsupported by the time they left the agency

AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE SHORTAGE

AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE SHORTAGE

AGENCIES' STRATEGIES (190 SURVEYED AGENCIES)

Horizontal bar chart with categories (top to bottom):
- Increase Starting Pay
- Increase Exisitng Working Pay
- Hiring Bonuses
- Retention Bonuses
- Referral Bonuses
- Change Job Qualifications
- Speed Hiring Process
- Improve Worker Safety
- Changes to Work Procedures
- Encourage Workers to Delay Retirement
- Allocate Staff Time More Effectively
- Other Solutions

Legend: ■ Implemented ■ Working to implement

1. RECRUITING
2. HIRING
3. TRAINING AND ONBOARDING
4. WORKING CONDITIONS AND POLICIES
5. AGENCY CULTURE AND MORALE

AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE SHORTAGE

RECRUITING

Expanding recruitment capacity is essential. Creatively **advertising** positions in new media, developing new **partnerships**, and having a physical **presence in the community** make for successfully attracting applicants.

STRATEGIES

- Increase agency recruiting capacity
- Improve job advertising effectiveness
- Cultivate referral networks
- Increase an agency's visibility via public events
- Make applications more accessible

CTA has developed a network of partner organizations that helps it engage many potential applicants.

Long Beach Transit's talent acquisition manager has prioritized attending community events to reach potential employees.

AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE SHORTAGE

HIRING

The **hiring process** is critical and **needs appropriate resources.** Given the attrition in the hiring pipeline, some agencies have developed approaches to **process a high volume of applicants.**

STRATEGIES

- Streamline the hiring process
- Expand interview capacity
- Conduct mass hiring events
- Ensuring tests and checks do not exclude otherwise qualified applicants

Greater Cleveland RTA conducted a step-by-step audit of their hiring process and the result is a hiring process down from 86 steps to about 40, and from five months to two and a half.

AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE SHORTAGE

TRAINING AND ONBOARDING

Training is an essential part of onboarding. Small changes can make training **more accessible and effective** and contribute to a positive agency culture.

STRATEGIES

- Shorten the gap between offer and first day by establishing early training and onboarding

- Expand on-the-road training

- Make training more accessible (virtual and pre-recorded training modules)

- Train for a positive culture

Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority created a paid "early start" training program

Utah Transit Authority (UTA) increased retention between hire and training start dates ensuring applicants begin training rapidly after hiring.

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AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE SHORTAGE

WORKING CONDITIONS AND POLICIES

Work-life balance, predictability, and adequate compensation matter more now to transit workers. Agencies and unions can make changes to **increase the appeal of transit work** and increase the **engagement** of existing workers.

STRATEGIES

- Increase agency capacity for better scheduling

- Rethink shift selection

- Expand full-time work

- Incentivize retention and shift distribution through pay

- Protect workers' health and safety

COTA tackled the scheduling improvement through the creation of the Schedule Modernization Team (SMT) with staff across departments, establishing a systematic approach to understanding and addressing the issue.

New software should increase compliance, ease coordination, and allow for operators to swap shifts and days off.

AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE SHORTAGE

AGENCY CULTURE AND MORALE

Strong, encouraging agency culture appeals to potential and current workers. Agencies can attract and retain workers through **responsive, meaningful engagement, acknowledging accomplishments**, and providing clear **pathways for career growth.**

STRATEGIES

- Establish clear pathways for growth

- Invest in engagement, recognition, and acknowledgement

Riverside Transit Authority management partnered with the union to develop a mentoring program and training to prepare employees for promotional roles in or out of operations.

LBT is working to break down the perception that different parts of the organization are separate from each other.

THE TOOLKIT AND OTHER RESOURCES

THE TOOLKIT

- The toolkit guides agencies through a workforce shortage assessment
  - Understand your processes and your numbers
  - Identify issues and strategies
  - Assess the maturity of your capabilities to ensure processes are efficient and self-sustaining

TABLE 7: AGENCY SELF-ASSESSMENT

	Problem Statement	If you're having this problem, see these strategies below
RECRUITING	We don't know how many people apply for a job, interview, complete background checks/other tests, are offered a position, and/or ultimately accept.	R1
	My agency doesn't get enough applicants.	R3, R4, H2
	My agency can't keep up with the volume of recruiting work that we have (posting and advertising positions, reviewing and responding to applications, etc.).	R2, H1
	We have trouble getting potential applicants to complete and submit applications.	R5
HIRING	My agency has difficulty conducting enough interviews for operations positions.	H1, H2
	Many of our applicants disengage before we can make an offer of employment.	H2, H3, H4
	We lose qualified applicants because of difficulties completing and passing various types of tests and checks.	H4, T1, T4
	A high proportion of workers who are offered positions don't accept or don't show up for training.	H3, T1, W3, W6
EXISTING WORKFORCE	Many workers who accept offers of employment don't complete training.	T3
	Many new workers quit within the first year of beginning their regular duties.	T2, T5, W6
	My agency would like to improve worker schedules, but we're not sure how to go about it or what changes would be most effective.	W1
	My agency is having trouble hiring and retaining operators because of worker dissatisfaction regarding working schedule.	W2
	Junior operators are leaving because they are dissatisfied with their work schedules.	W2, W4
	Workers at my agency feel they are exposed to an unacceptable level of hazard on the job.	W5
	My agency is losing workers to other employers.	W6
	Low employee morale is affecting worker retention and absenteeism.	C1, C2

OTHER APTA WORKFORCE RESOURCES

- Workforce Mini-Guides
  - Six-part topical series
  - Industry insights and stories
  - Case studies, lessons learned, and best practices

- Transit Workforce Readiness Guide
  - In-depth guide to creating an outreach program for high-school students

THANK YOU!

Learn more at: www.apta.com/shortage

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