

# Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Minnesota's Public Transportation Employees

The entire transportation industry is facing a growing workforce shortage, and it's especially pronounced within the public sector. Without immediate action, critical services will be affected. Minnesota transportation agencies commissioned a study and interviewed public sector employees to identify causes of the shortage and strategies public agencies can implement to attract and retain staff. The full report is available at [mndot.gov/research](http://mndot.gov/research) and [lrrb.org](http://lrrb.org).



## WHAT'S BEHIND THE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE?

### Changing demographics

- The labor force is growing slowly, aging rapidly and becoming more diverse.
- Baby boomers are retiring.
- Urban populations are expanding, while rural areas are aging and becoming less diverse.

### Market competition

- With fewer workers available, the private and public sectors are directly competing.
- Other organizations are focusing on retaining employees and growing their potential.

## BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF TRANSPORTATION JOBS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

- ✓ Positive organizational culture
- ✓ Work-life balance
- ✓ Competitive benefits
- ✓ Job stability
- ✗ Red tape hinders advancement potential
- ✗ Less flexibility to hire employees
- ✗ Less competitive pay
- ✗ Undisclosed expectations

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*The markets are challenging. ... When you have a good person, they have multiple offers and you can't be competitive because you're locked into a pay plan. There's no flexibility in the system to allow you to hire the right person.*

— Anonymous public agency employee



**149**

The number of anonymous public agency employees who responded to the study's job satisfaction survey.

## REASONS EMPLOYEES LEAVE

- More pay .....47%
- Advancement potential .....22%
- Greater freedom in choosing work schedule and tasks.....17%
- Cultural support .....9%
- Opportunity to relocate .....5%

### Relationship Between Engineers and Technical Workers

Engineers are considered to be the problem-solvers, while technical workers are the doers.

Both roles are essential to agencies' work and are closely intertwined, but differences in salary can appear to prioritize formal education over experience and lead to a perception of social status within the agency. This, in turn, can lead to resentment and perceived injustice.

Emphasizing teamwork and encouraging technicians to share their expertise may help alleviate these negative feelings.

## WHAT CAN PUBLIC AGENCIES DO?



### Accentuate the positives

Highlight the benefits of working in public agencies.



### Cut the red tape

Make exceptions for hiring, promotions and compensation when appropriate.



### Increase awareness

Promote the work transportation agencies do, helping students visualize a career path.



### Offer mentorship

Provide opportunities for employees to learn and grow from each other.



### Write accurate job descriptions

If long days and overtime are part of the job, say so upfront so employees know what they're agreeing to.



### Plan for succession

Fill vacancies quickly and don't rely on existing staff to simply absorb more work.



### Encourage documentation

Invest in systems that will help ensure key information doesn't leave when employees retire.

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