The average transit executive spent 23 years in the industry, with an average annual salary of $113,000, according to METRO’s seventh annual survey.

>BY JANNA STARCIC, Executive Editor

GENERAL MANAGER SURVEY:

GMS SAY BUDGETS STABILIZING, SEEK REVENUE ALTERNATIVES

IN A TURNAROUND FROM LAST year’s General Manager Survey, nearly 60% of respondents are not facing a budget shortage. Of those reporting an issue, 61% cut service, while 58% raised fares and 40% eliminated positions in order to cope. To deal with rising costs such as healthcare and fuel prices, GMs are revisiting contract charges annually, and cutting back on discretionary costs (i.e. advertising); establishing wellness programs and purchasing fuel in contract blocks; as well as reducing workers comp exposure and purchasing more fuel-efficient buses.

We asked transit executives what they thought of the new transportation bill (MAP-21). Some said it was too early to tell, or were indifferent, while some liked the changes to New Starts evaluation criteria and the move toward formula funds. Others disliked that it was only a two-year bill and that Positive Train Control requirements were not adjusted to realistic expectations.

Looking at the makeup of our survey respondents, four out of five were male, while the number of average years worked in the industry was 23. The average annual salary was $113,000, with the highest reported being nearly $300,000 and the lowest being under $33,000. A majority of respondents (63%) feel transit executives are paid fairly, while nearly nine out of ten do not ride their own systems to work. Transit executives spent nearly half of their time dealing with governmental/public affairs, with business/budget dealings coming in second.

Three out of four transit executives cite advertising as an additional way to generate revenue. Applying for state and federal grants, as well as selling maintenance services and acting as a local agent for Greyhound are “other” methods being employed.
Survey respondents worked an average of 23 years in the transit industry. The median number was 25. The longest time spent in the industry was 50, while the shortest was six months.

The highest number of employees reported was 2,100 and the lowest was three.

The average annual salary was $113,000, with a median of $103,000. The highest salary reported totaled nearly $300,000 and the lowest was under $33,000.
**Operating Budget vs. Salary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUDGET</th>
<th>AVERAGE SALARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10 Million</td>
<td>$76,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10M - $24.99M</td>
<td>$119,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25M - $49.99M</td>
<td>$149,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50M - $99.99M</td>
<td>$167,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100M - $199.99M</td>
<td>$171,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300M - $399.99M</td>
<td>$257,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400M - $499.99M</td>
<td>$290,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Title vs. Salary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>AVERAGE SALARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>$180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dir. of Transportation</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Dir.</td>
<td>$103,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>$124,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Manager</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transit executives with the title CEO had the highest salaries, with an average of $180,000.

**Years vs. Salary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS IN INDUSTRY</th>
<th>AVERAGE SALARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 years or less</td>
<td>$82,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>$78,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>$104,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>$138,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 40 years</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender vs. Salary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>AVG SALARY</th>
<th>MEDIAN SALARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>$94,000</td>
<td>$86,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>$117,000</td>
<td>$98,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Where Does Most of Your Time Go?**

- **27%** Business/Budgets
- **16%** Operations
- **14%** Other
- **9%** Personnel Issues
- **49%** Government/Public Affairs

A majority of a transit executive’s time is spent dealing with government/public affairs-related issues. Respondents who selected “other” spent time on planning and procurements.
HOW HAVE YOU DEALT WITH BUDGET SHORTFALLS?

- Raised fares: 58%
- Cut service: 61%
- Delayed vehicle purchases: 30%
- Delayed projects: 44%
- Layoffs: 23%
- Eliminated positions: 40%
- Cut wages: 9%
- Other: 26%

Two-thirds of respondents raised fares to deal with budgetary shortfalls. “Other” methods included wage freezes and securing a dedicated revenue stream by passing a sales tax.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR SERVICE DO YOU CONTRACT OUT?

- 0%
- Less than 25%
- 26-50%
- 51-75%
- 100%

A majority of transit system respondents do not contract out their services, while 10% contract out their entire fleet.

HOW IS YOUR SYSTEM GENERATING ADDITIONAL REVENUE?

- Raising fares: 46%
- Advertising: 73%
- Leasing/selling real estate: 14%
- Selling naming rights: 2%
- Public-private partnerships: 25%
- Other: 25%

Three out of four transit executives cite advertising as an additional way to generate revenue. Applying for state and federal grants, as well as selling maintenance services and acting as a local agent for Greyhound, are “other” methods being employed.

DO YOU RIDE YOUR SYSTEM TO WORK?

- 88% NO
- 12% YES

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR RIDERSHIP?

- 73% UP
- 4% DOWN
- 23% FLAT
Congratulations to Norma Zamora for being featured in METRO Magazine’s 2012 Women in Transportation from your friends and colleagues at First Transit!

Way to go!

Norma Zamora
B Metro Director/
First Transit Manager

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One-fourth of respondents say funding is their greatest challenge. Politics comes in second, with 16% reporting.

What is your greatest challenge on a day-to-day basis?

- 8% Labor/Personnel Issues
- 12% Public Perceptions
- 16% Politics
- 25% Funding
- 4% Time Management
- 10% Improving Service
- 6% Leadership
- 6% Increasing Ridership
- 2% Keeping up with Technology

What are you looking into for your system?

- Smart cards ....................................... 57%
- Video surveillance .......................... 41%
- Automatic vehicle location .......... 41%
- Real-time arrival info .................... 50%
- Asset mgmt. system .................... 26%
- Other ............................................. 16%

Is your system faced with a budget shortfall?

- 41% Yes
- 59% No

What technologies are you looking into for your system?

One-fourth of respondents say funding is their greatest challenge. Politics comes in second, with 16% reporting.

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