

Manager Retention and Job Change in the Transit Industry: A Survey of Manager Attitudes

CHARLES WHITE AND SHELDON EDNER

Issues related to the retention of management personnel in the transit industry are examined. The results are based on survey responses of 1,301 managers from 178 transit agencies and indicate that turnover may be substantially higher than previous reports have suggested. Specifically, 42.6 percent state that they will leave their present agency and 21.3 percent expect to leave the industry altogether. Analysis of these findings suggests that the problem of retention may be more pronounced for managers who are 5 to 10 years into their careers or whose positions are outside core transit areas (i.e., operations and maintenance). From the analysis of factors that might be related to the problem of retention, three explanatory factors are suggested: (a) absence of commitment to a career in transit, (b) lack of a clear career ladder within the industry, and (c) the end of the period of rapid transit growth. The major implication of these findings is that the managerial recruitment needs of the industry may be greater than previously indicated and will be especially pronounced for managers in the areas of marketing, personnel, and finance.

In this study, issues related to the managerial personnel needs of the transit industry over the next 5 years are examined. Specifically, career expectations reported by 1,301 managers from 178 agencies are explored. The responses are grouped on the basis of whether the managers will be with the same transit agency, a different agency, retire, or leave the transit industry. The extent to which these stated intentions are related to agency characteristics, individual demographics, professional experience, and evaluations of personal career development and opportunities is examined.

The findings suggest that the industry will experience substantial change in its managerial cadre over the next 5 years and that the recruitment needs may be greater than previously forecast (1). Further, results indicate that recruitment needs will be more pronounced for some management categories than for others. Finally, though respondents are generally satisfied with their current positions and with the development of their careers, they are not optimistic about the opportunities for advancement in their present agencies or in the industry. This general pessimism about future opportunities is a major factor related to the potential loss of current managers to other industries and does, therefore, pose a major concern for the industry.

BACKGROUND

The 1985 Transportation Research Board report on transportation professionals indicated that

... approximately 11.4 percent (2.3 percent per year) of the current transit work force can be expected to retire by 1990. This means that approximately 3,000 executive, professional, and supervisory job openings will be created during the next 5 years to replace those who retire.

... transit agencies anticipate that total attrition due to retirement and other causes will amount to about 18.7 percent of the professional work force in the next 5 years. After retirements have been deducted, ... this leaves 7.3 percent of the professionals—2,000 transit professionals—who will change jobs or drop out of the work force during the next 5 years. Although some of these professionals will leave the transit industry, many will probably remain working in transit but simply change agencies to advance their careers (1, p. 118). (Emphasis added.)

The conclusions of this TRB report (1) are based on the assumption that three primary factors influence the human resource requirements of the industry: (a) changes in service, ridership, and funding; (b) retirement rates; and (c) attrition due to long-term leave, disability, or job change. There are additional, possibly more subtle, factors that may also be important for the retention and recruitment of qualified transit managers. In general, these factors appear to be related to individual manager commitment to transit as an occupational setting that offers opportunities for personal development and advancement.

In 1973, Mundy and Spychalski found transit managers to be largely made up of an up-from-the-ranks professional cadre. Although this still may be an accurate depiction for some of the current managers, the past 13 years have produced significant changes both in the sources of management personnel and the types of managers sought by the industry. The 1970s saw many agencies adding new types of positions or creating new departments to respond to changing service demands, new technologies, and organizational settings. Marketing, planning, and personnel tasks expanded, resulting in the recruitment of managerial personnel with an increasingly diverse array of training, prior experience, and career expectations.

It is not clear that there ever were well-defined career ladders for transit managers. These career paths are even more ambiguous today because management has diversified away from the core aspects of transit in operations and maintenance toward new skills and disciplinary orientations. To the extent that

clear opportunities for career advancement are related to commitment to a career in transit, retention of qualified managers may have become more problematic.

In a previous paper (3), the authors explored whether difficulties attracting new management personnel were related to the size, organizational setting, organizational structure, or degree of change that characterized transit agencies. Analysis revealed no discernible trends, implying that recruitment difficulties were more of an industry problem than specific to any particular class of transit agency. Consequently, the recruitment problems experienced by the industry may be related to some more generic factor, such as the attractiveness of transit as a setting for long-term career development. This factor could also impair the ability of transit to retain qualified managers.

For the purposes of this study, four general factors that may be related to anticipated career moves were identified: (a) agency characteristics, (b) individual demographic characteristics, (c) professional experience, and (d) evaluation of personal career development and advancement opportunities. The analysis of the effects of these factors permits isolation of classes of transit managers that may be more or less prone to make job changes.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Between late 1984 and early 1985, surveys were sent to 3,050 managers in 207 transit agencies. The individuals receiving these questionnaires had been previously identified by personnel lists or organization charts supplied by each of these agencies. The characteristics of these agencies in terms of fleet size, organizational structure, institutional setting, and fiscal characteristics are reported in *Transit Agency Characteristics: An Industry Profile* (4). Managers were sent individually addressed questionnaires, with one follow-up mailing sent to those who did not respond initially. Completed responses were received from 1,301 managers for a return rate of 43 percent. The respondents did not comprise a scientifically drawn random sample of managers in the transit industry. However, responses were received from persons in 178 agencies, representing the range of agency size and institutional and locational characteristics. Further, the sample included a broad array of managerial functions. Thus the sample was deemed a good cross section of industry management personnel.

The questionnaire requested information on a number of topics, including career experience, training, educational background, attitudes toward the industry, perceptions of career development opportunities, training needs, short-term career plans, and assessments about the future of transit. This information is applied to our examination of issues related to the problem of managerial retention. First, the characteristics of the sample are described with respect to career experience, agency characteristics, and individual demographics. Then the short-term career plans of the managers are examined, and finally factors are explored that may be related to those plans, particularly with respect to those who indicated that they expected to leave the industry during the next 5 years.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Two important trends were established by the results summarized in Table 1. First, the overwhelming majority of re-

spondents had fewer than 20 years' service not only with their current agencies, but also in the transit industry. This tenure is distinctly shorter than the managerial tenure reported in 1973 by Mundy and Spychalski (2, p. 11), who stated: "The vast majority of transit managerial personnel have 20 or more years in transit operations—most of this in a single system." For the present sample, the median number of years in the industry is 12.1, with median tenure at the present agency of 8.4 years.

TABLE 1 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

	N	Percent
Experience Prior to Current Position		
This agency	618	50.2
Other transit	140	11.4
Other transportation	88	7.1
Other public sector	90	7.3
Private sector		
(nontransportation)	190	15.4
Military	58	4.7
School	18	1.5
Other	29	2.4
Total	1,231	100.0
Years in Transit		
Less than 5	222	17.1
5-9	290	22.4
10-14	326	25.2
15-19	167	12.9
20-29	172	13.2
30 or more	118	9.1
Total	1,295	99.9
Years at Current Agency		
Less than 1	51	3.9
1-2	136	10.5
3-5	303	23.3
6-10	334	25.7
11-20	318	24.5
21-29	98	7.5
30 or more	59	4.5
Total	1,299	99.9
Present Position		
General manager/executive		
director	139	10.7
Other administration	130	10.0
Planning	174	13.4
Personnel	102	7.9
Operations director	110	8.5
Maintenance supervisor	130	10.0
Other operations	244	18.8
Marketing	52	4.0
Finance	124	9.6
Other management	91	7.0
Total	1,296	99.9

Second, only slightly more than half (50.2 percent) of respondents indicated that their primary experience prior to their current position had been with their present agency. Further, only 11.4 percent came to their present position from another transit agency. Thus the present cadre of transit managers tends to have less experience in transit. Further, there does not appear to be a pattern by which individuals shift from one agency to another as they pursue their careers.

TABLE 2 SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION AND AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS

	N	Percent
Number of Full-Time Employees		
Less than 25	40	3.1
25-99	170	13.3
100-499	287	22.4
500-999	113	8.8
1,000-1,999	160	12.5
2,000 and more	513	40.0
Total	1,283	100.1
Number of Vehicles		
Less than 50	168	13.2
50-99	154	12.1
100-249	164	12.8
250-499	125	9.8
500-999	215	16.8
1,000-1,999	258	20.2
2,000 and more	193	15.1
Total	1,277	100.0
Institutional Type		
City/county	331	25.4
Multipurpose	148	11.4
Special district	513	39.4
Nonprofit	168	12.9
Private	56	4.3
Other	85	6.5
Total	1,301	99.9

Most of the respondents are from agencies with more than 500 vehicles and more than 1,000 employees (see Table 2). Managers from larger agencies are expected to be less likely to express dissatisfaction with career advancement opportunities because of the greater number of promotional opportunities. Managers in smaller agencies are expected to indicate a desire to transfer to larger operations as a means of advancing their careers.

The educational background of the sample shown in Figure 1 illustrates the diversity of the current managerial cadre. Some

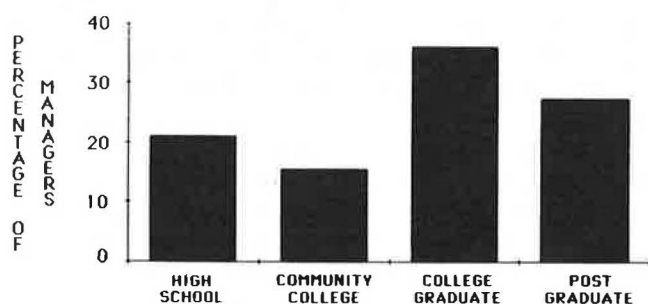


FIGURE 1 Education of transit industry managers.

63.5 percent have at least a 4-year college degree. This figure represents a significant increase over the 14.8 percent who held 4-year college or university degrees in 1973 (Table 3) (2, p. 16). The data indicate that those without a college degree

TABLE 3 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	N	Percent
Education		
High school degree	272	21.0
Community college	201	15.5
College graduate	468	36.1
Postgraduate work/other	356	27.4
Total	1,297	100.0
Educational Specialty		
General/liberal arts	96	9.0
Social science	101	9.0
Engineering	115	11.0
Business	362	34.0
Public administration	77	7.0
Education	27	2.0
Law	23	2.0
Transit	42	4.0
Planning	34	3.0
Other	102	9.0
None	105	10.0
Total	1,084	100.0
Age (years)		
20-30	110	8.5
31-40	555	43.1
41-50	330	25.6
51-60	237	18.4
61+	57	4.4
Total	1,289	100.0
Sex		
Female	195	15.7
Male	1,047	84.3
Total	1,242	100.0
Race		
American Indian	12	0.9
Hispanic	37	2.9
Asian	19	1.5
Black	93	7.3
White	1,106	86.7
Other	8	0.6
Total	1,275	99.9

tend to be older, suggesting that the managerial core will increasingly include college graduates.

Among those who indicate an educational specialty, business is the predominant discipline (33 percent). The presence of the large number of individuals who trained for a profession outside of core transit areas (operations or maintenance) raises the issue of whether the industry offers sufficient career opportunities to retain persons whose professional training is not directly related to transit.

Related to this issue is the finding that the median age of the sample is 40.6 years. In 1973, Mundy and Spsychalski (2, p. 10) reported that the average age of different categories of managers ranged between 49 and 55 years. The managers in the present sample still have the bulk of their careers ahead of them, as shown in Figure 2, and will presumably evaluate their commitment to transit in terms of perceived opportunities to meet career goals. Should those opportunities be perceived to be limited, many will seek to transfer their professional skills to other industries.

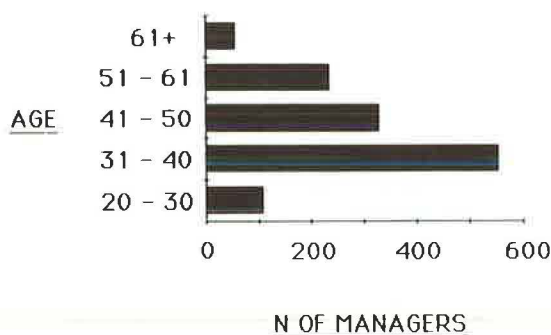


FIGURE 2 Manager responses by age group.



FIGURE 3 Where will you be in 5 years?

SHORT-TERM CAREER PLANS

To measure and estimate the degree to which retention of managers might be a problem for the industry, the survey asked the question: "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?" The responses to this question are shown in Figure 3.

Although these results describe anticipated rather than actual change, it is clear that should our respondents act on these expectations, transit will experience substantial movement by its managerial personnel during the next 5 years. Some 42.6 percent reported that they anticipated leaving their present agency. Further, more expected to leave transit and obtain employment in other industries (21.3 percent) than expected to move to positions in other transit agencies (13.2 percent). This finding conforms with the earlier indication that relatively few managers came to their present position from another transit agency. It further supports the notion that clear paths for career development within transit may be a problem for the industry.

The absence of comparative data makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the implications of these results for the industry. Nonetheless, they do suggest that the industry may be confronted with the need to replace a substantial proportion of its current managerial core, particularly with respect to the loss of over 20 percent to other industries. The next 5 years may see a significant loss of talent within the transit industry.

AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS AND CAREER PLANS

Table 4 presents the relationships between measure of agency size and organizational setting with career expectations. These results indicate that managers in small-to-moderate-sized agencies tend to be more likely than those in larger agencies to plan to leave their present place of employment and move to

another agency. Those managers in larger agencies who plan to move are more likely to indicate that they will leave transit, as opposed to seeking a position in another agency. With respect to organizational setting, city and county agencies appear to have a somewhat greater retention problem, with a higher proportion anticipating a move to another transit agency.

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CAREER PLANS

Table 5 presents the relationships between individual characteristics and short-term career plans. A significant finding is that women are substantially more likely than men to indicate that they expect to leave the industry. Equally pronounced are the differences between managers with a 4-year college degree or graduate education and those with less formal education. Those with more education are less committed to continuing with their current agency and appear more likely to leave the industry. This trend is particularly striking among those who have continued their education past their baccalaureate degree. Over the next 5 years, the industry may lose many of its best-trained current managers and may have to take specific steps to address the concerns of this group. Finally, the ages of the respondents are significantly related to their career expectations. Those under the age of 40 are more likely to expect to leave their current agency and to leave the transit industry than are older respondents.

To some extent it was anticipated that those who were part of the baby-boom generation, defined here as the present 31-40 age group who had entered the transit industry during the period of expansion of the 1970s would be the most likely to feel the pressure of the current decline of promotional opportunities and therefore express a desire to leave their current agencies or the industry. However, the data indicate that the youngest age group is the most likely to expect to leave the industry.

CAREER PLANS AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Each of the measures of length of professional experience is significantly related to career expectations, with newer managers indicating that they are more likely to leave their present agency or leave the transit industry than those with longer seniority.

In general, these associations indicate that a substantial proportion of those who have been managers for 10 or fewer years are likely to leave the transit industry during the next 5 years. More of this group plans to leave the transit industry rather than pursue opportunities in a different transit agency. Even though many of these managers expect to continue with their current agencies, the results suggest that the industry may be confronted with substantial leakage to other industries of its managerial talent, particularly those who received their initial professional experience in transit and are only 5 to 10 years into their careers.

The relationship between managerial category and career plans also indicates some important distinctions among transit

TABLE 4 CAREER PLANS AND AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS

	Same Agency (percent)	Different Agency (percent)	Leave Transit (percent)	Retired (percent)	N
Number of Employees					
Less than 25	54.1	10.8	32.4	2.7	37
25-99	59.2	21.0	15.3	4.5	157
100-499	49.3	19.2	22.5	9.1	276
500-999	63.6	12.1	17.2	7.1	99
1,000-1,999	55.3	8.7	30.0	6.0	150
2,000 or more	61.6	8.0	20.3	10.1	474
Total					1,193
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.12)$					
Number of Vehicles					
Less than 50	51.3	24.0	19.5	5.2	154
50-99	56.8	18.9	20.3	4.1	148
100-249	49.7	17.6	20.3	12.4	153
250-499	63.5	11.3	19.1	6.1	115
500-999	55.6	11.6	25.8	7.1	198
1,000-1,999	62.2	5.8	19.9	12.0	241
2,000 or more	62.9	7.4	22.3	7.4	175
Total					1,184
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.11)$					
Organizational Type					
City/county	53.5	20.5	18.7	7.7	310
Multipurpose	58.7	6.5	24.6	10.1	138
Special district	56.4	11.7	23.5	8.5	472
Nonprofit	65.4	9.6	16.7	8.3	156
Private	79.6	7.4	9.3	3.7	54
Other	56.2	17.9	29.5	6.4	78
Total					1,208
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.11)$					

TABLE 5 CAREER PLANS AND INDIVIDUAL DEMOGRAPHICS

	Same Agency (percent)	Different Agency (percent)	Leave Transit (percent)	Retired (percent)	N
Education					
High school degree	69.4	7.5	6.7	16.3	252
Community college	70.7	12.0	8.9	8.4	191
College graduate	54.9	12.9	27.1	5.1	435
Postgraduate work/other	43.9	18.7	31.9	5.8	326
Total					1,204
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.19)$					
Age					
20-30	44.8	22.9	32.4	—	105
31-40	54.9	17.2	27.9	—	512
41-50	68.	11.4	18.2	2.3	307
51-60	62.8	5.4	8.5	23.3	223
61 or over	22.0	—	8.0	70.0	98
Total					1,245
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.35)$					
Sex					
Female	50.3	13.3	34.8	1.7	181
Male	58.7	13.2	18.9	9.2	975
Total					1,156
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.16)$					
Race					
American Indian	70.0	10.0	20.0	—	10
Hispanic	65.7	17.1	11.4	5.7	35
Asian	35.3	23.5	23.5	17.6	17
Black	69.2	13.2	14.3	3.3	91
White	56.6	12.8	22.0	8.7	1,027
Other	71.4	14.3	14.3	—	7
Total					1,187
$(p < 0.05; \nu = 0.07)$					

TABLE 6 CAREER PLANS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

	Same Agency (percent)	Different Agency (percent)	Leave Transit (percent)	Retired (percent)	N
Experience Prior to Current Position					
This agency	61.7	11.0	18.5	8.9	574
Other transit	49.2	23.5	18.9	8.3	132
Other transportation	52.6	24.4	16.7	6.4	78
Other public sector	57.0	14.0	25.6	3.5	86
Private sector					
(nontransportation)	53.7	9.1	31.4	5.7	175
Military	63.6	3.6	20.0	12.7	55
School	38.9	16.7	27.8	16.7	18
Other	52.0	12.0	28.0	8.0	25
Total					1,143
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.12)$					
Years in Transit					
Less than 5	45.5	13.9	36.6	3.9	202
5-9	52.0	16.5	29.3	2.2	273
10-14	60.8	16.0	19.0	4.2	306
15-19	67.9	13.5	14.1	4.5	156
20-29	71.1	7.5	10.7	10.7	159
30 or more	47.2	2.8	5.7	44.3	106
Total					1,202
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.28)$					
Years at Current Agency					
Less than 1	53.2	17.0	27.7	2.1	47
1-2	46.0	21.8	31.5	0.8	124
3-5	43.4	20.4	33.2	2.9	274
6-10	61.8	12.9	21.5	3.8	317
11-20	68.7	8.0	13.7	9.7	300
21-30	80.5	2.3	3.4	13.8	87
30 or more	35.1	-	3.5	61.4	57
Total					1,206
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.32)$					
Present Position					
General manager	38.5	27.0	24.6	9.8	122
Other administration	49.2	13.1	28.7	9.0	122
Planning	49.4	17.9	27.8	4.9	162
Personnel	61.1	4.2	26.3	8.4	95
Operations director	61.2	19.4	9.7	9.7	103
Maintenance supervisor	72.5	11.7	6.7	9.2	120
Other operations	71.1	8.2	11.2	9.5	232
Marketing	36.7	12.2	42.9	8.2	49
Finance	53.0	9.6	35.7	1.7	115
Other management	62.7	6.0	19.3	12.0	83
Total					1,203
$(p < 0.01; \nu = 0.20)$					

managers. First, those who hold core transit positions in operations and maintenance are the least likely to indicate that they will be leaving the industry. Conversely, marketing and finance administrators are the most likely to indicate that they anticipate leaving the transit industry. General managers or executive directors seem to anticipate shorter tenures with their present agencies, but they generally appear to plan to continue their careers in the industry.

Overall, with the exception of core transit positions, nearly 35 percent of current managers expect to either leave transit or retire during the next 5 years. The distinctions among managerial categories also lend support to the earlier contention that the changes experienced by the industry have resulted in the development of an increasingly diverse managerial cadre. This cadre is better educated, younger, and trained in a broader array of professional disciplines than were their counterparts of 15 years ago. These differences have also made the problem of retention a more complex issue for the industry.

CAREER PLANS AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Eighty-four percent of the managers indicated that they did not plan a career in transit. This group was also asked to identify what their initial career plans had been and to indicate why they took a job with the transit industry. The questions asked and the responses given follow.

Did You Plan Career in Transit?

	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Yes	205	16.0
No	1,079	84.0
Total	1,284	100.0

What Were Your Career Plans?

	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>
No plans	118	12.0
Public transportation	27	2.7
Public nontransportation	265	26.9
Private transportation	38	3.9
Private nontransportation	500	50.8
Any job	37	3.8
Total	985	100.1

Why Did You Take a Job in Transit?

	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent of Responses</i>	<i>Percent of Cases</i>
Needed a job	188	17.9	21.4
Position relevant to training	308	29.3	35.1
Lack of opportunity to apply skills elsewhere	132	12.6	15.1
Pay/benefits	98	9.3	11.2
More responsibility	164	15.6	18.7
Like transit	86	8.2	9.8
Other	74	7.0	8.4
Total	1,050	100.0	119.7

The total number of respondents was 877; multiple responses occurred.

Not only did most not plan a career in transit, nearly the same proportion (77.7 percent) did not plan a career in any part of the transportation industry. Further, most planned to pursue a career in the private sector. These results indicate that commitment to the industry is not an attitude that is instilled as part of the education and training experience of those who became transit managers. The diversification of the management cadre has meant that many if not most do not train for transit or do not work up through the ranks of a transit agency. Rather, many train for a profession and find transit to be one of many possible industries to apply that training.

The reasons given for taking a job in transit amplify the problem. Slightly more than half of those responding indicated that they entered the industry because the position provided an opportunity relevant to their professional training. By implication, retention of these individuals will be affected by their perceptions of the opportunities offered by transit to develop and advance the skills for which they have trained. As is shown in Tables 7 and 8 the perceptions of the sample about development and advancement opportunities are not very positive.

Most of the respondents indicate that they are satisfied with their present positions. The major variations are found in the somewhat lower proportions of those in the new professional positions of planning, personnel, marketing, and finance indicating that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their present positions. From the perspective of managerial retention, it is encouraging that in none of these categories do more than 15 percent express dissatisfaction with their current positions.

However, perceptions of career development and advancement opportunities are much less positive and, perhaps, begin to define at least one of the central dimensions of the retention problem. Only in the cases of general managers and operations personnel did majorities indicate that they were satisfied or very satisfied with career opportunities in transit. The new management groups were to a significant degree more likely to express dissatisfaction with opportunities in the industry.

The evaluations of the advancement opportunities offered by present agencies and the industry lend further support to this assessment. None of the different manager classes is particularly optimistic about future advancement in their present agencies. With the exception of operations directors and maintenance supervisors, more rate advancement opportunities in their current agency as poor to very poor than good to very good. The respondents are somewhat more optimistic about advancement opportunities offered by the industry. However, with the exception of operations directors, fewer than half of those in each group rated these opportunities as good to excellent.

To further refine the issue of career advancement, the managers were asked to state how they could advance their careers more rapidly. The results given Table 9 suggest two conclusions. First, the most frequent response was the need for more education given by 37.3 percent of the respondents (see also Figure 4). Open-ended comments from the sample indicated a desire for either more education or more training in transit or management. Second, some 23.1 percent indicate that moving from their present agency would be the best way to advance their careers (11.8 percent leaving transit, 11.3 percent going to a different agency).

[illegible][illegible]

TABLE 9 WAYS TO RAPIDLY ADVANCE CAREER

	N ^a	Percent of Responses	Percent of Cases
Nothing	105	11.9	14.1
More experience	258	29.2	34.6
More education	278	31.4	37.3
Leave transit	88	9.9	11.8
Different agency	84	9.5	11.3
Not sure	24	2.7	3.2
Other	48	5.4	6.4
Total	885	100.0	118.7

^aTotal number of response was 746; multiple responses occurred.

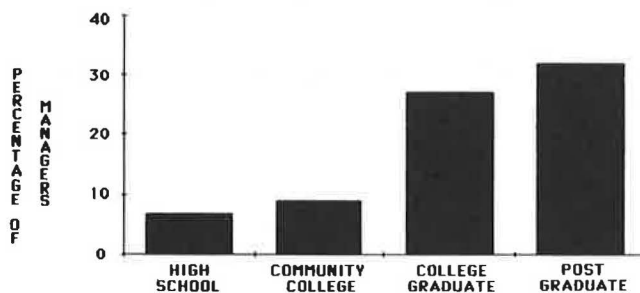


FIGURE 4 Future educational plans.

The generally negative perceptions of career development and advancement opportunities offered by the industry would seem to be a major component of the retention problem, particularly with respect to the new professionals. Although most are satisfied with their present position, this path of career development is perceived as being either unclear or nonexistent. Many see further education as a vehicle for future development, but a substantial proportion believe that movement from their present agency or from the industry offers the best prospects. This point is consistent with the earlier finding that over the next 5 years, more managers expect to leave the industry (21.3 percent) than shift to a different transit agency (13.2 percent).

SUMMARY

To the extent that the sample is representative of industry managers, there have been some significant changes in the character of the management cadre since Mundy and Spychalski (2) reported their findings in 1973. Current managers are younger, more highly educated, and more diverse in terms of training specialization and current function. Further, most did not plan to pursue a career in transit, and nearly half came to their present position from outside their current agency. These changes reflect the dynamic character of the industry resulting from a period of expansion and increased utilization of new management specialties.

The findings also indicate that with the changing character of the management core there has developed at least the potential of a serious problem in managerial retention. This problem was found to be particularly true for the new professionals, as opposed to those in core transit positions. Should the respon-

dents follow through on their stated intentions, the industry will experience substantial managerial turnover during the next 5 years, not just in terms of switching from one agency to another but also in terms of qualified, trained individuals leaving the industry altogether.

A central dimension of the problem lies in the lack of positive views about the opportunities for future career development and advancement opportunities offered by individual agencies and by the industry. Although most of the respondents express satisfaction with their present positions, many, particularly newer managers, appear negative about transit as an industry offering opportunities for professional growth. These individuals are simply more likely to indicate that they plan to leave not only their present agencies but also the industry.

Three factors may be related to this trend: (a) the training and experience of new managers as these are related to commitment to the industry, (b) the possible lack of a clear career ladder within the industry, and (c) the end of the period of rapid expansion, decreasing the availability of promotional opportunities. With respect to the first factor, the findings indicate that concomitant with the changing character of the management core is the increasing specialization within professional disciplines. Nearly half of the sample came from outside their present agency and most did not plan a career in transit. The most common reason given for entering the industry was that it provided an opportunity to practice the profession for which these managers had trained. The change from the up-from-the-ranks character of managers has resulted in a lesser degree of commitment to the industry and a greater willingness to pursue opportunities elsewhere.

The lack of a clear path for career development in the industry is suggested by two findings. First, only some 11.4 percent of the respondents came to their present position from another transit agency. Second, only 13.2 percent plan to shift to another agency during the next 5 years. This contrasts with the 21.3 percent who plan to leave the industry. In general, little evidence exists that career development in transit includes shifts from one agency to another. Rather, the respondents indicate that they will either stay with their present agency or leave the industry. Whether those staying with their current agency will find significant promotional opportunities is unclear. Our respondents are generally positive. The changing character of the industry, however, suggests that time spent with a given agency is no longer a guarantee of advancement.

The third factor, decline in promotional opportunities, is not directly gleaned from the data. Rather, it is a more general factor resulting from the end of the period of rapid industry growth and changing federal policy. Additionally, Douglas Hall (5) has observed:

... in today's leaner, flatter organizations, senior leadership is more critical than ever. Also, with fewer senior slots available, the consequences of a poor fit in any one position are quite serious. And with large numbers of talented, educated "baby boomers" from which to choose, there is more need for good methods of identifying high-potential candidates (5, p. 7).

As the industry has entered a period of slow growth, the promotional opportunities for managers hired in the last 10 to

15 years have declined. Many of these individuals are trained in particular disciplines that are not directly dependent upon transit (e.g., marketing and planning). Further, the data indicate that many do not see promotional or even lateral moves within the industry as a central part of their career planning. Thus many entry- and middle-level managers plan to take their skills elsewhere.

These three factors affect the perceptions of the current managerial core regarding future opportunities in the industry. The generally pessimistic attitude expressed by the sample raises the possibility of substantial losses of managerial talent for the industry over the next 5 years. With the exception of the directly transit-related managerial functions of operations and maintenance, many current managers anticipated acting on their perceived mobility, with the result that the industry may face future problems not only retaining current talent but also recruiting replacements for those who in fact follow through on their stated intentions.

REFERENCES

1. *Special Report 207: Transportation Professionals: Future Needs and Opportunities*. TRB, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1985.
2. R. A. Mundy and J. C. Spsychalski. *Managerial Resources and Personnel Practices in Urban Mass Transit*. Pennsylvania State University, University Park, 1973.
3. C. White, S. M. Edner, and K. Ketcheson. Management Recruitment in the Transit Industry. In *Transportation Research Record 1077*. TRB, National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1986, pp. 39-47.
4. C. White and S. M. Edner. *Transit Agency Characteristics: An Industry Profile*. UMTA-OR-11-0002-86-2). UMTA, U.S. Department of Transportation, June 1986.
5. D. T. Hall. An Overview of Current Career Development Theory, Research and Practice. In *Career Development in Organizations* (Douglas T. Hall and Associates, eds.), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1986.

Publication of this paper sponsored by Committee on Transit Management and Performance.