



# 2019 REGIONAL PEER REVIEW



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

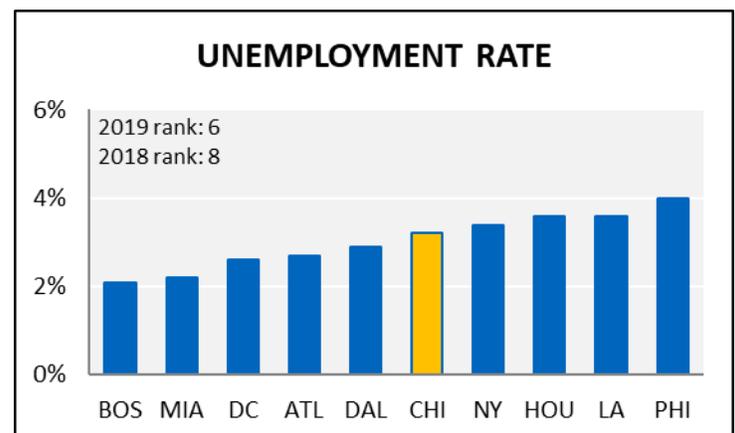
The regional peer report card was developed to provide context to the performance of the Chicago region's transit service by relating it to comparable peer regions from across the country. To accomplish this goal, the Regional Peer Review incorporates data reported to the National Transit Database (NTD) by all transit agencies that receive federal funding. This report includes NTD data for report year 2019, the most currently available, which was published in November 2020.

Peer regions were selected based on population, so that the top ten US metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) are represented: Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC, with the Chicago metropolitan area being the third-largest. For each of the top ten regions, the main transit operators were determined so as to best represent each region's public transportation service.

Chicago-area transit remained ranked in the top half of the peer regions in twelve of the sixteen measures included in this report and again as one of the top three performers for seven of the measures. There was one upward rank change for the year, three downward rank changes, and twelve measures for which Chicago's ranking remained unchanged from 2018. The Chicago region maintained each rank position in the service coverage area but lost ground for two measures of efficiency and effectiveness. The one upward rank position change was for the reliability measure, miles between major mechanical failures, for which Chicago improved to sixth place. The solvency area saw one downward rank change, for fare revenue per passenger trip, and Chicago maintained its ranking for each of the other four measures.

Employment is closely linked to transit use and is tracked to give context to ridership trends. In 2019, the Chicago region unemployment rate of 3.2%, a 0.7 percentage point improvement over 2018, moving Chicago up two rank positions to sixth, the most favorable position it has held over the past nine years.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are not apparent in the data contained within this report, but will greatly affect every aspect of transit performance in subsequent report years.



### Service Coverage

- monitors both how much service is available to people in the region (in terms of population and land area) and how much of that service capacity is used

### Service Efficiency & Effectiveness

- evaluates the level of resources spent on delivering service in relation to the level of service provided and the extent to which passengers are using that service

### Service Maintenance & Capital Investment

- indicates the allocation of capital funds and the replacement and maintenance of infrastructure components on a schedule consistent with their life expectancy

### Service Level Solvency

- assesses financial condition to ensure there are sufficient resources to meet current and ongoing budgetary needs (both operating and capital)

**Service Coverage:** Chicago's rankings for each of the coverage measures remained unchanged from 2018, ranking in the top three for four of the six measures of coverage. The Chicago region's best performance compared to its peer regions were for passenger trips, passenger miles, and passenger miles per resident; Chicago ranked second for each measure.

**Service Efficiency and Effectiveness:** The Chicago region held operating cost increases to 1.7% in 2019, compared to the peer average increase of 5.1%. However, the Chicago region lost three rank positions for operating cost per unit of transit capacity as vehicle revenue miles were unchanged from 2018 and average vehicle capacity decreased nearly 5%. Chicago also dropped one position ranking for operating cost per passenger mile in 2019 as its passenger miles traveled showed one of the steepest decreases among the peer regions.

**Service Maintenance and Capital Investment:** In 2019, 17.6% of Chicago's transit fleet vehicles were in service beyond their useful life benchmark, putting Chicago in the 8<sup>th</sup> rank position for this metric. However, Chicago ranked sixth for the reliability indicator, miles between major mechanical failures, an upward movement of one rank position from 2018.

**Service Level Solvency:** Although its fare revenue per passenger trip increased 2.7% in 2019, the Chicago region dropped one position to third as Boston saw a greater increase for the year. The Chicago region maintained rank positions for the other two fare-related measures, as well as for both measures relating to capital program expenditures although each increased by roughly 10% 2019. In 2019, the Chicago region expended roughly one-third less than the peer average and roughly one-fourth what New York did on a per-capita basis for capital investment.

# SNAPSHOT

The table below shows the ranking of the Chicago-area transit operators for each performance measure contained within this report. Rankings are provided for 2018 and 2019 report years and reflect a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating the most favorable performance. The right-most column illustrates changes in rankings from 2018 to 2019, with green upward arrows indicating a favorable change in rank position and red downward arrows showing an unfavorable change in rank position.

Performance Measure	Rank 2018	Rank 2019	Rank Change
<b>SERVICE COVERAGE</b>			
Transit Capacity (Trips) per Area Resident	5	5	--
Vehicle Revenue Miles per Service Area Square Mile	3	3	--
Unlinked Passenger Trips (Ridership)	2	2	--
Passenger Trips per Area Resident	4	4	--
Passenger Miles Traveled	2	2	--
Passenger Miles Traveled per Area Resident	2	2	--
<b>SERVICE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS</b>			
Operating Cost per Unit of Transit Capacity	4	7	↓
Operating Cost per Passenger Trip	5	5	--
Operating Cost per Passenger Mile	2	3	↓
<b>SERVICE MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT</b>			
Percent of Vehicles Beyond Useful Life Benchmark	N/A	8	--
Miles between Major Mechanical Failures	7	6	↑
<b>SERVICE LEVEL SOLVENCY</b>			
Fare Revenue per Passenger Trip	2	3	↓
Fare Revenue Shortfall per Passenger Trip	4	4	--
Fare Recovery Ratio	3	3	--
Capital Program Expenditures	5	5	--
Capital Program Expenditures per Area Resident	6	6	--

# PEER SELECTION

The peer group selected for use in the Regional Peer Review consists of the top ten metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) as defined by the US Bureau of the Census: Chicago, Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. Population and land area data correlate to each MSA region. For consistency with the six-county RTA area, the main transit properties serving each MSA were included in this report.

## PEER AGENCIES INCLUDED WITHIN METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS

Geographic Region	Transit Agencies Included
<b>Chicago</b>	Chicago Transit Authority, Metra, Pace
<b>Atlanta</b>	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, Cobb County Department of Transportation Authority
<b>Boston</b>	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
<b>Dallas/Fort Worth</b>	Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Fort Worth Transportation Authority
<b>Houston</b>	Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County
<b>Los Angeles</b>	Access Services, Foothill Transit, Long Beach Transit, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Montebello Bus Lines, Omnitrans, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside Transit Agency, Santa Monica Big Blue Bus, Southern California Regional Rail Authority
<b>Miami</b>	Broward County Transit, Miami-Dade Transit, PalmTran, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority
<b>New York</b>	All Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) operating agencies (Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North Commuter Railroad, MTA Bus, New York City Transit, Staten Island Railway), Nassau Inter-County Express, New York City Department of Transportation, Port Authority Trans-Hudson, Suffolk County Transportation Division, Westchester County Bee-Line System
<b>Philadelphia</b>	Port Authority Transit Corporation, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
<b>Washington, DC</b>	City of Alexandria DASH, Ride-On Montgomery County Transit, Virginia Railway Express, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

# NOTES/METHODOLOGY

1. This report is based on 2019 published data from the National Transit Database (NTD), the most currently available data, released in November, 2020. The data submission by transit agencies is a requirement of receiving federal funding and thus follows guidelines and procedures established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
2. The fare recovery ratio used in this report follows the NTD definition, which is the proportion of operating costs that are covered by fare revenues paid by passengers. The NTD recovery ratio differs from the RTA recovery ratio, which takes into account certain adjustments as enumerated in the RTA Act such as the exclusion of various costs, the treatment of depreciation, and the inclusion of in-kind services.
3. The use of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) was selected as the standard representation for each urban area and has been incorporated into this report for both population and square mileage data. *Source: Cumulative Estimates of Resident Population Change and Rankings: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.*
4. New Jersey Transit, which serves both the New York and Philadelphia regions, has been excluded from this and prior year reports because there is no way to disaggregate the data between the two urban areas. As a result, there is some under-representation of transit service for these urban areas. Similarly, the Maryland Transit Administration, which primarily serves the Baltimore region and also serves the DC area, has not been included in this or prior reports as its operating data cannot be divided among the DC and Baltimore metropolitan statistical areas. As a result, Washington, DC metropolitan area transit service is slightly understated.
5. 2019 data reflect a change to report the *percent of vehicles beyond their useful life benchmark*, which shifts reporting from the lower limit of a vehicle's useful life expectation to an upper limit expectation, in lieu of the measure *percentage of vehicles beyond useful life*. Benchmark data reflect unique operating environments and circumstances of individual transit agencies, which will change as vehicles are rebuilt or overhauled. Where no benchmark was stated for a revenue vehicle, the default Federal Transit Administration (FTA) benchmark specific to the revenue vehicle type was used.
6. In 2019, Metra began using new methodology to calculate unlinked passenger trips which uses data from mobile tickets sold through the Ventra App to estimate the number of trips taken using these passes. Metra engaged a qualified statistician to confirm that this methodology meets the FTA's statistical sampling requirements and has the attestation documentation on file.

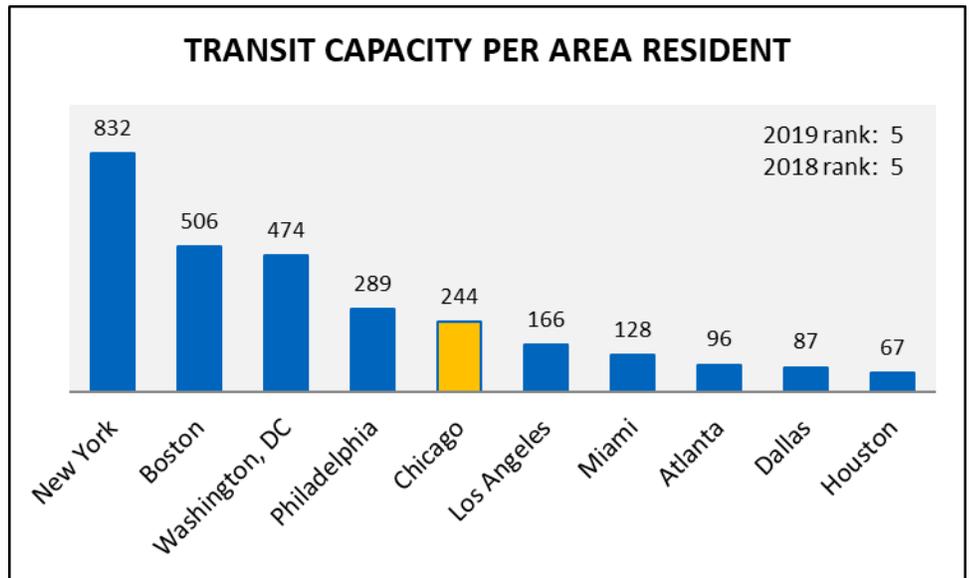
# PEER CHARACTERISTICS

2019	CHICAGO	ATLANTA	BOSTON	DALLAS	HOUSTON	LOS ANGELES	MIAMI	NEW YORK	PHILADELPHIA	WASHINGTON, DC
Population Ranking	3	9	10	4	5	2	7	1	8	6
Population (thousands)	9,459	6,020	4,873	7,573	7,066	13,215	6,166	19,216	6,102	6,280
Square Miles	7,197	8,339	3,487	8,928	8,827	4,848	4,602	6,687	5,077	5,598
Population Density	1,314	722	1,397	848	800	2,726	1,340	2,874	1,202	1,122
Vehicle Revenue Miles (millions)	238	62	94	65	77	279	100	710	98	163
Passenger Trips (millions)	550	120	367	75	90	530	122	3,973	319	384
Passenger Miles (millions)	3,563	721	1,680	478	582	3,075	775	19,475	1,522	1,931
Operating Cost (millions)	\$ 2,665	\$ 510	\$ 1,506	\$ 647	\$ 574	\$ 3,189	\$ 901	\$ 13,421	\$ 1,379	\$ 2,243
Fare Revenue (millions)	\$ 1,002	\$ 134	\$ 672	\$ 77	\$ 66	\$ 509	\$ 143	\$ 6,673	\$ 490	\$ 733
Capital Funds Expended (millions)	\$ 759	\$ 304	\$ 1,065	\$ 452	\$ 153	\$ 1,943	\$ 287	\$ 6,524	\$ 667	\$ 995
Average Trip Length (miles)	6.5	6.0	4.6	6.3	6.5	5.8	6.3	4.9	4.8	5.0
Average Vehicle Passenger Capacity	62.8	56.2	120.3	64.6	39.6	45.7	50.1	110.3	86.2	92.0

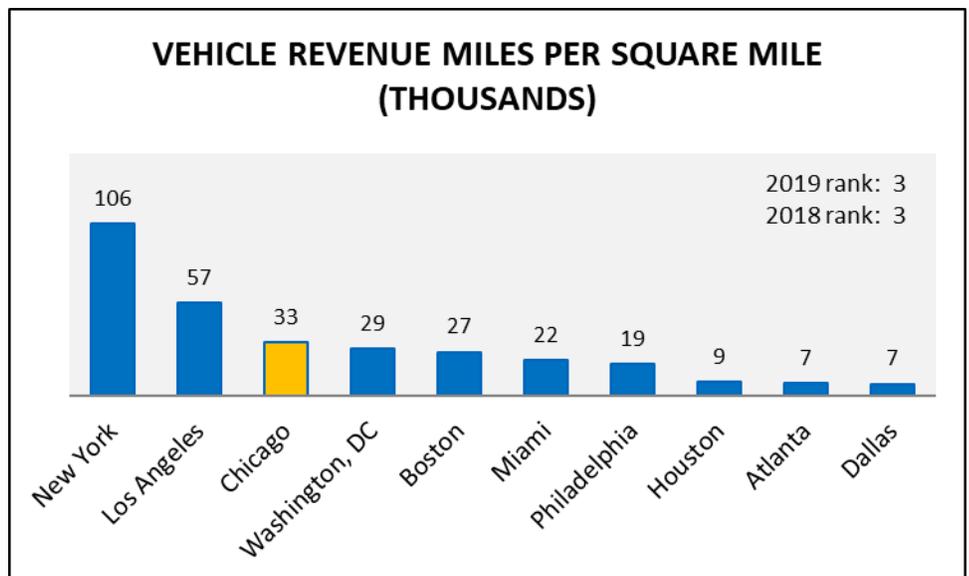
# RESULTS

## Service Coverage

**Transit Capacity per Area Resident** is the amount of available service, as measured by average vehicle capacity and vehicle revenue miles, per person in each region.

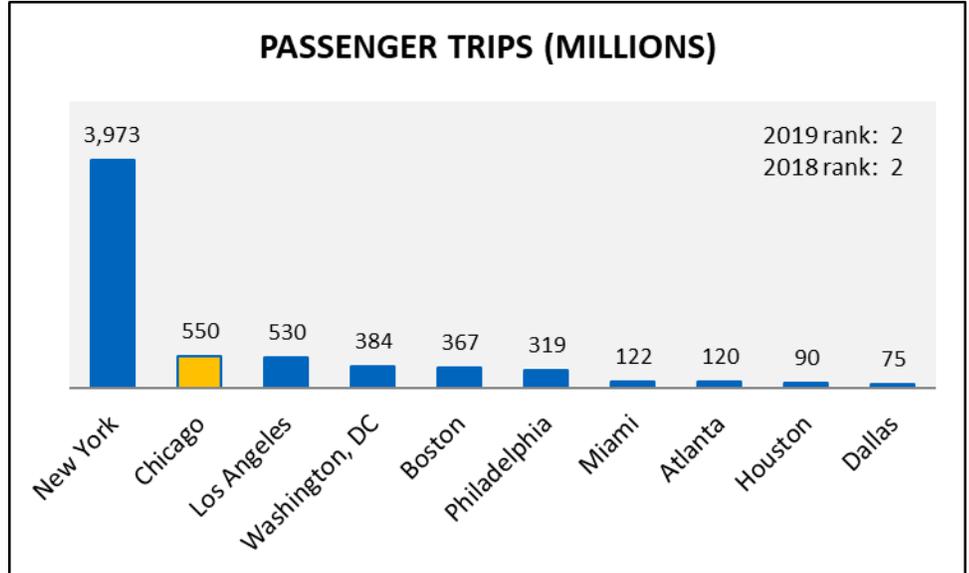


**Vehicle Revenue Miles per Square Mile** is the total number of miles traveled annually by transit operators in a region per square mile of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA).

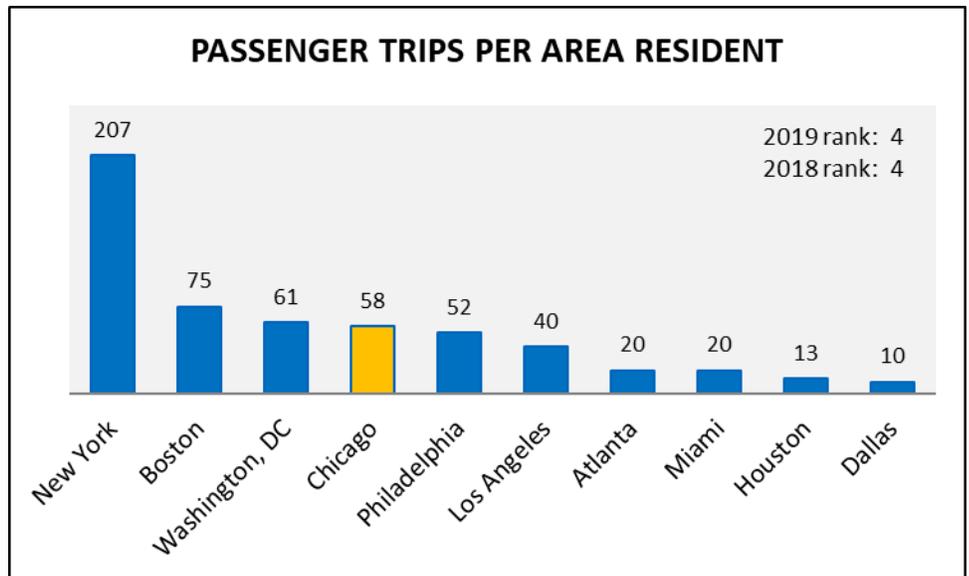


## Service Coverage

**Passenger Trips**, or ridership, refers to the number of trips taken on public transportation. A trip is counted each time a public transit bus or train is used. Each transfer between vehicles from the beginning to the end of an individual journey is counted as a separate “unlinked” trip.

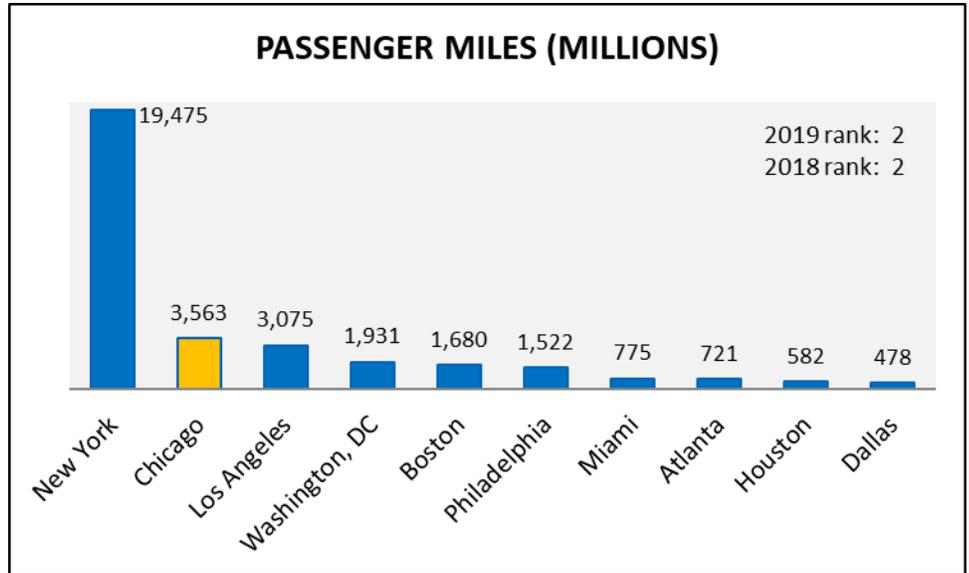


**Passenger Trips per Area Resident** is the average number of rides taken per resident annually.

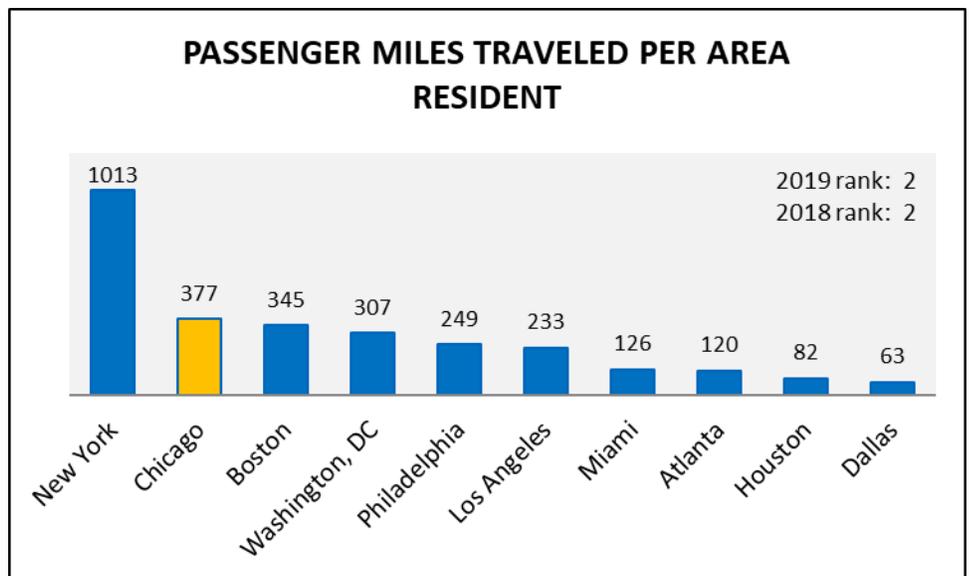


## Service Coverage

**Passenger Miles Traveled** is the cumulative sum of the distances ridden by each passenger.

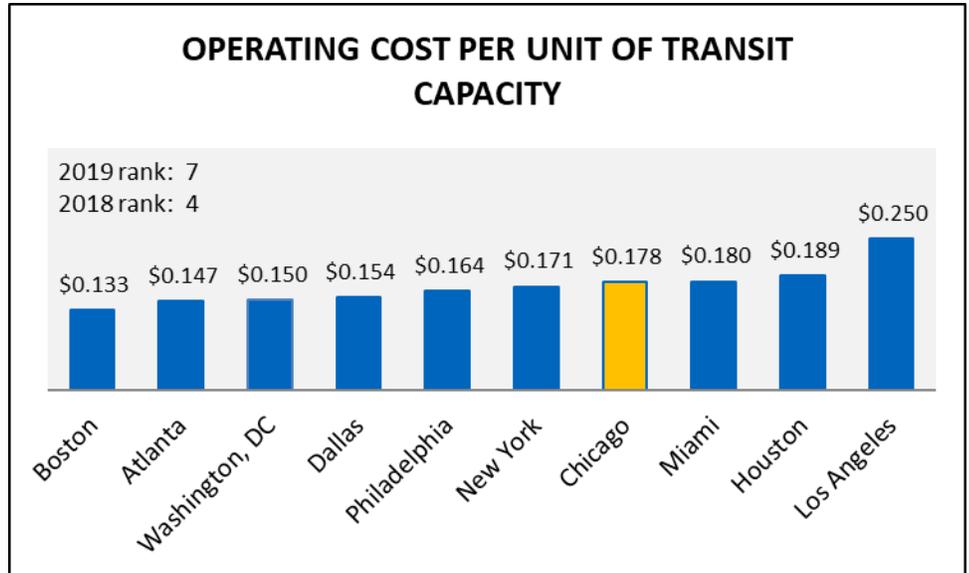


**Passenger Miles Traveled per Area Resident** is the average number of passenger miles traveled per resident annually.

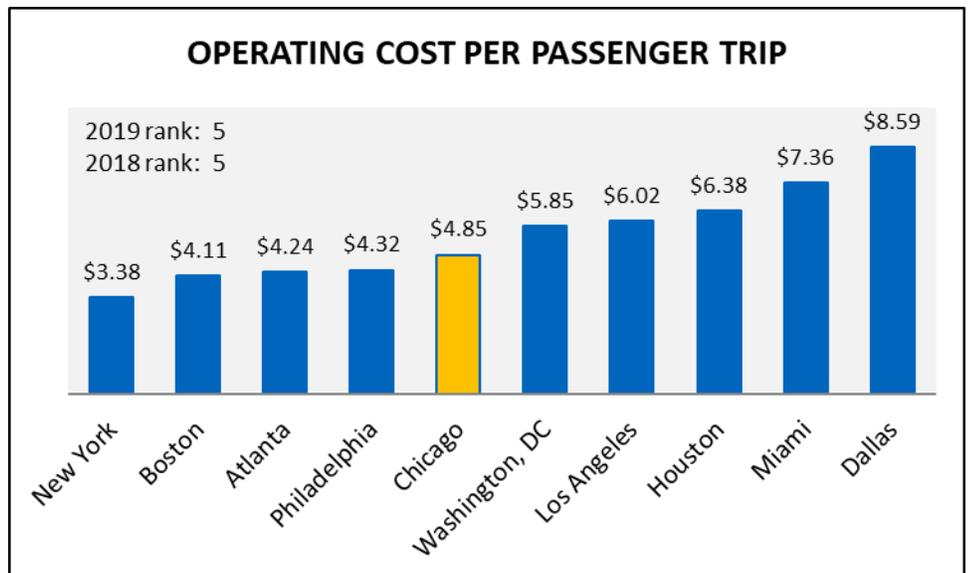


## Service Efficiency and Effectiveness

**Operating Cost per Unit of Transit Capacity** is the average cost of providing a passenger seat (or space) for each mile of an individual trip, whether or not it is taken.

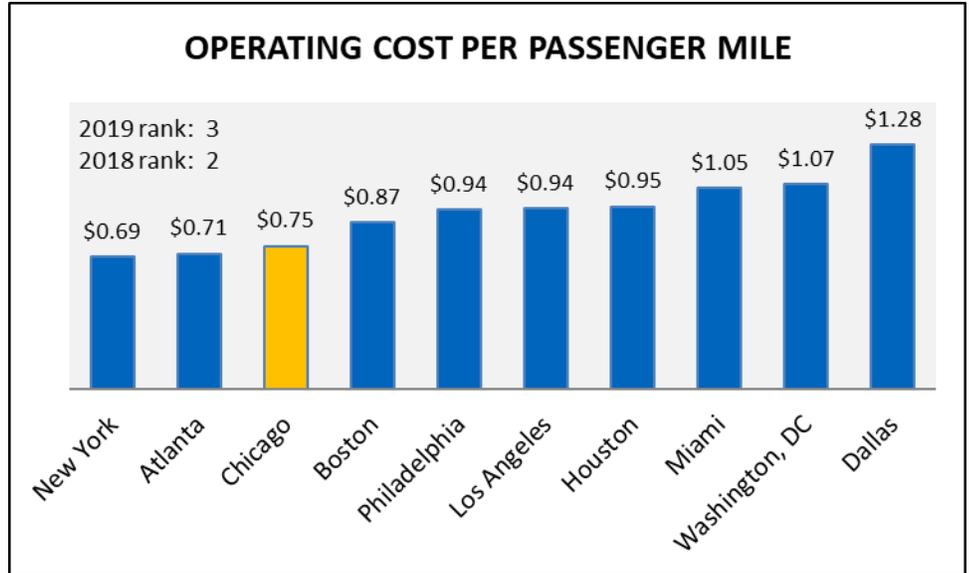


**Operating Cost per Passenger Trip** is the total operating cost divided by the total number of unlinked passenger trips taken on public transportation vehicles.



## Service Efficiency and Effectiveness

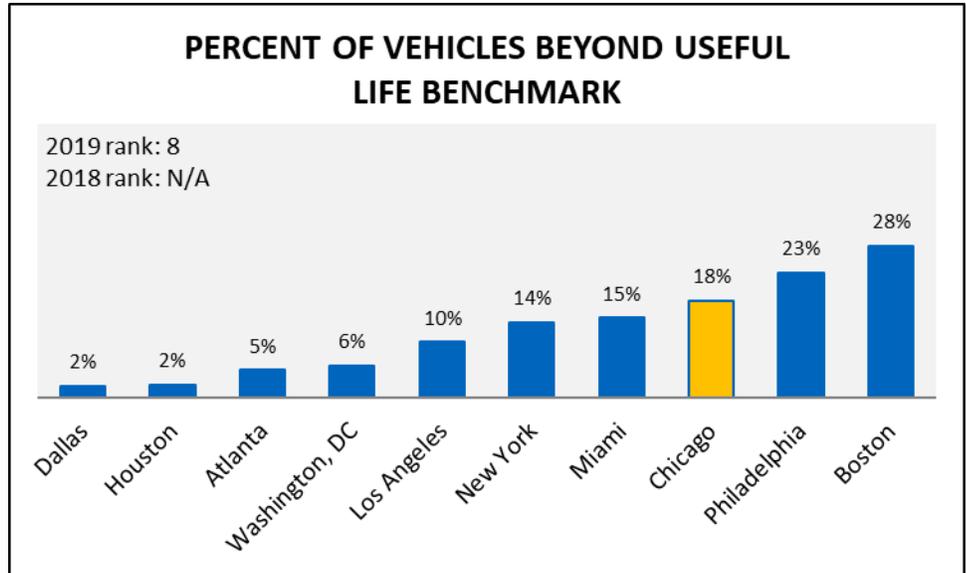
**Operating Cost per Passenger Mile** is the total operating cost divided by the total number of miles traveled by passengers.



## Service Maintenance and Capital Investment

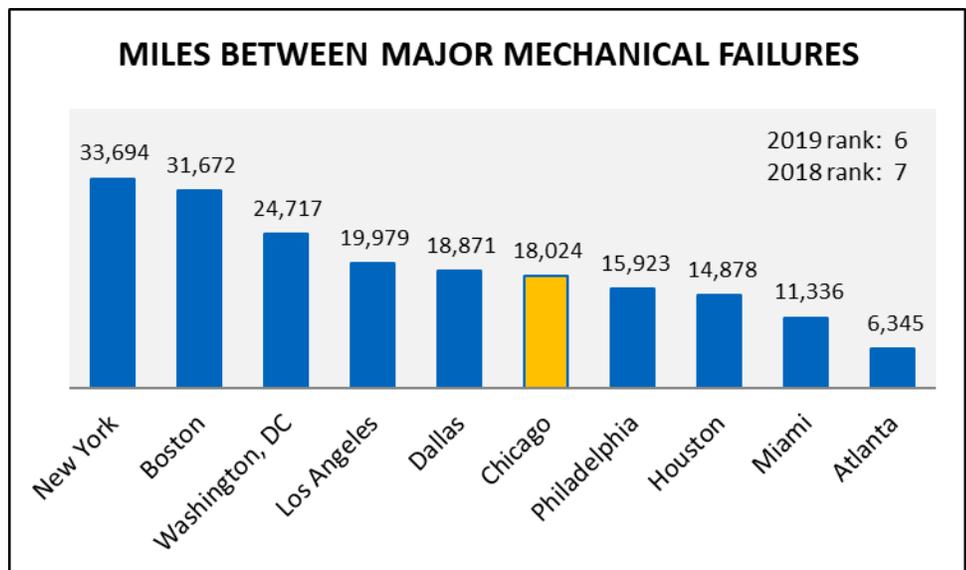
### Percent of Vehicles Beyond Useful Life Benchmark

The percentage of a revenue vehicle fleet in service beyond the expected lifecycle of a capital asset. Expected lifecycles take into account a particular transit agency's operating environment, and also reflect vehicle rehabilitations and overhauls.



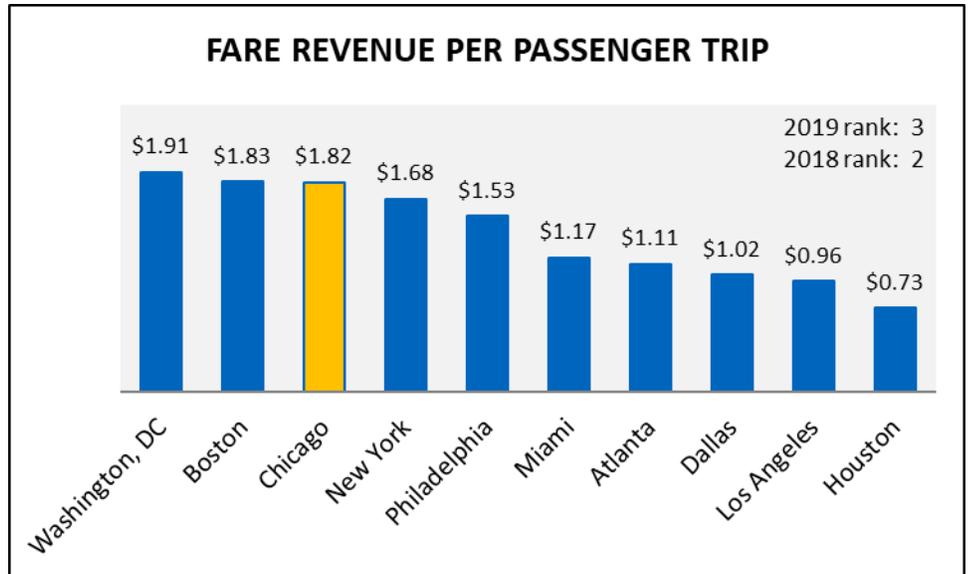
### Miles between Major Mechanical Failures

is the average number of miles that vehicles travel while in revenue service between failures of some mechanical element or a safety concern that prevents a vehicle from completing a scheduled trip or from starting the next scheduled trip.

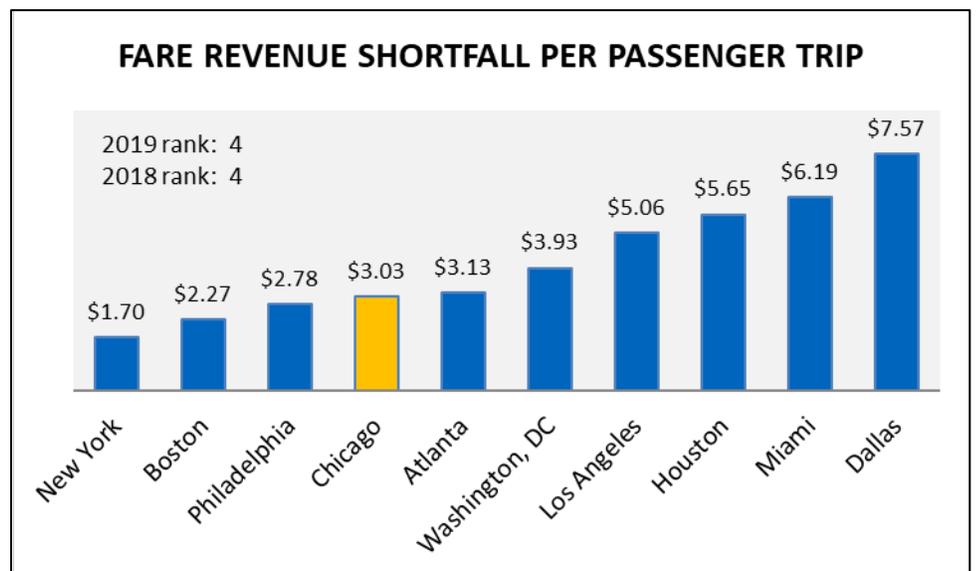


## Service Level Solvency

**Fare Revenue per Passenger Trip** is the average fare paid by customers per trip.



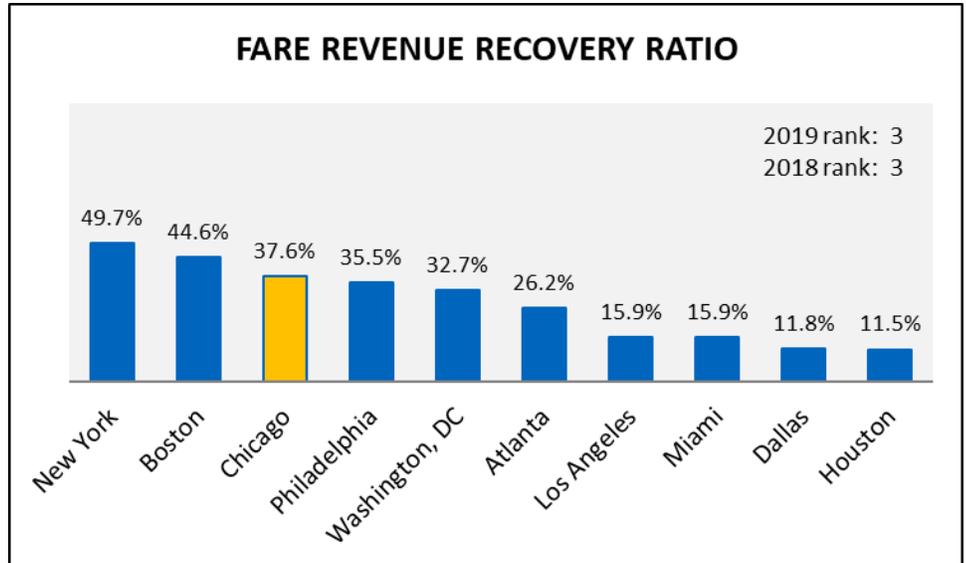
**Fare Revenue Shortfall per Passenger Trip** is the average cost of each trip that is not covered by the fare paid by customers. The balance of operating costs is covered by other directly-generated revenue (advertising, concessions, etc.) and public funding (local, state, and federal).



## Service Level Solvency

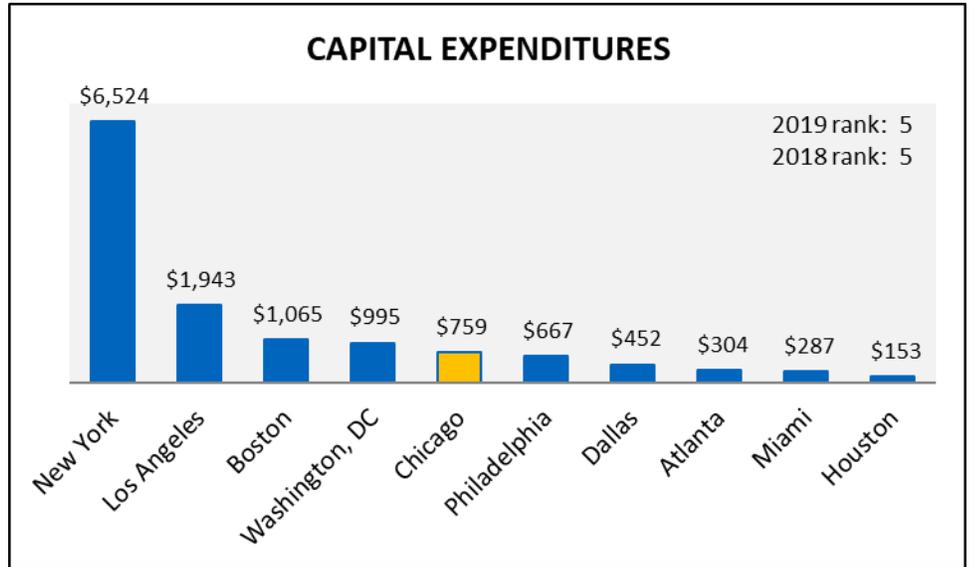
### Fare Recovery Ratio

is defined by the National Transit Database (NTD) as the proportion of operating costs that are covered by fare revenues paid by passengers. The NTD fare recovery ratio differs from the RTA recovery ratio, which takes into account other system-generated revenue and certain adjustments as enumerated in the RTA Act.

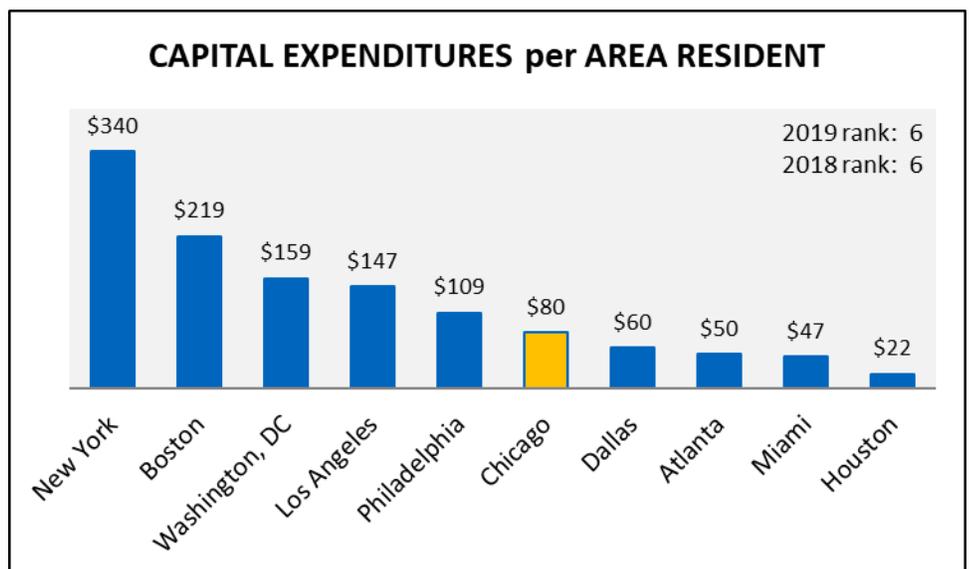


## Service Level Solvency

**Capital Program Expenditures** is the amount of capital funds expended to finance the maintenance, enhancement, and expansion of the transit system's infrastructure. Note, capital funds expended in one year may include funding from prior years due to the longer-term nature of capital project implementation.



**Capital Program Expenditures per Area Resident** is the total amount of capital expenditures per resident of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA).





175 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1650  
Chicago, Illinois 60604  
Phone: 312-913-3200  
[RTAChicago.org](http://RTAChicago.org)

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Chicago Transit Authority  
567 W. Lake St.  
Chicago, IL 60661  
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[www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com)



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Chicago, IL 60661  
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Pace  
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Arlington Heights, IL 60005  
847-364-7223  
[www.pacebus.com](http://www.pacebus.com)