



Regional  
Transportation  
Authority

# Regional Report Card

## Five-Year Trends

Report Years 2016 - 2020

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# Executive Summary

The regional report card was created in response to the enactment of the 2008 RTA Act amendment. In the interest of increased public accountability and transparency, the Act amendment required the development of performance measures for regional transit that are reported on an annual basis. With cooperation and input from the region's Service Boards (CTA, Metra, and Pace), a set of eighteen measures were selected for reporting across five service areas: coverage, efficiency and effectiveness, delivery, maintenance and capital investment, and solvency. The Regional Report Card uses data submitted to the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database (NTD) as well as some directly-reported indicators. The results from each Service Board are aggregated for the purpose of describing the performance level of the Chicagoland transit system as a whole. This report covers the period 2016-2020, the most recent data available, which was finalized in August 2021. Key points of 2020 performance include:

- **The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and negative impact on nearly every performance result contained within this report and will likely continue to affect numerous aspects of transit performance in subsequent report years.**
- System ridership, which had declined for seven consecutive years, was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Annual systemwide ridership for 2020 totaled 230.9 million in 2020, a 58% reduction from 2019 and 62% lower compared to 2016.
- Capital investment saw a significant, positive shift in 2020 following 2019's new capital construction bill (dubbed "Rebuild Illinois") and new funding streams enabled by increased state gas tax and vehicle registration fees. Regional capital expenditures in 2020 increased 19% to \$900 million, the highest level since 2013.

## Service Coverage

Coverage measures monitor how much service is available to the region's residents (supply) and how much of that supply is actually used by the public (consumption). This report describes supply in terms of transit capacity per area resident, which takes into account the number of seats available to be filled as well as the total number of vehicle revenue miles of service offered by the transit agencies. This performance measure has trended downward in recent years primarily due to the restatement of CTA train capacities and the use of smaller vehicles for ADA Paratransit service. Service during the pandemic saw additional reductions as the Service Boards responded to ridership losses and limited staffing.

Service consumption, as expressed by unlinked passenger trips and passenger miles traveled, decreased significantly in 2020. Following a peak in 2012, unlinked passenger trips had decreased each year through 2019 and saw a 58% reduction in 2020 -- a one-year loss of 318.8 million trips. Passenger trips taken per resident declined each of the five years under review,

from a peak of 72 trips in 2016 to 28 trips in 2020. The region saw five consecutive yearly decreases in passenger trips per vehicle revenue mile, ending 54.3% lower compared to 2016. Passenger miles traveled followed the same general trend as ridership, with a peak in 2012 followed by years of consecutive declines; this indicator ended the five-year period 68.2% lower.

## Service Efficiency & Effectiveness

These measures evaluate the cost of supplying transit services. In 2020, regional operating costs were approximately \$120 million lower compared to 2019. However, the regional inflation-adjusted operating cost per vehicle revenue mile was 13.1% higher in 2020 as vehicle miles were reduced by over 16%; over the five-year period, the inflation-adjusted operating cost per vehicle revenue mile increased 13.6%. The inflation-adjusted operating cost per unit of transit capacity was 13.8% higher in 2020 compared to 2019 and 25.4% higher over the five-year period despite operating cost decreases, resulting from a reduction in service miles in response to the pandemic in 2020.

Cost effectiveness measures trended unfavorably over one- and five-year bases despite lower operating cost as ridership and passenger miles traveled were down for each of the five years under review. After adjusting for inflation, the regional operating cost per passenger trip increased 125% in 2020, to \$10.36. With the overall five-year ridership loss approaching 62%, the operating cost per passenger trip rose 149% since 2016, after adjusting for inflation. Since passenger miles traveled decreased at a similar rate to ridership over the five-year period, the operating cost per passenger mile nearly tripled from \$0.64 to \$1.90.

## Service Delivery

These indicators focus on customer service and safety. On-time performance is a key indicator of service delivery, and although the Service Boards use different methodologies to assess on-time performance for each mode, weighting their values by ridership provides a regional measure that shows an on-time performance of 84.1% for 2020. The number of reportable safety and security events decreased by 159 in 2020, but spread over a significantly lower ridership base, saw an incidence rate that increased 86.6% compared to 2019, to 2.6 incidents per million passenger trips.

## Service Maintenance & Capital Investment

This area of service refers to reliability and state of good repair of transit assets. Ten-year capital funding needed to achieve and maintain a state of good repair for all of the region's assets was determined in 2016 to be \$37.7 billion. A significant portion of that total, \$19.3 billion, is needed to address already past-due projects; known as the backlog, this amount illustrates the severity of deferred capital projects that has occurred over the years as federal

and state funding has been inconsistent and inadequate. The region requires another \$11.1 billion for regular replacement of assets and \$7.1 billion for capital maintenance projects over the next ten years. The region has set a funding goal of \$2 - 3 billion annually to achieve a state of good repair and provide enhancements to the transit system over the next twenty years. Actual annual levels of capital expenditures over the past five years averaged \$757.6 million, which does not fulfill the annual needs for regular replacement and maintenance costs, or address backlog projects.

Actual capital expenditures totaled \$3.79 billion between 2016 and 2020. The largest component of that investment went toward rolling stock, for the purchase and maintenance of service vehicles. However, the reliability measure, miles between major mechanical failures, has trended downward for five consecutive years, decreasing 32% over the five-year period.

## Service Level Solvency

Solvency measures reflect the region's financial condition to ensure there are sufficient resources to meet current and ongoing budgetary needs. Fare and pass price increases were implemented at all three Service Boards in 2018; each Service Board has also made fare policy adjustments within the past five years that contributed to increased fare revenue receipts. Additionally, improved fare revenue has occurred since the implementation of the Ventra fare payment system as riders have relied more heavily on pay-as-you-go fare options in lieu of discounted monthly passes. In 2020, as each Service Board reported significant ridership losses, they reported significantly decreased fare revenues, ranging from 52-72% below 2019. An average regional fare of \$1.56 reflects an inflation-adjusted decrease of 15.3% from 2019 and was 8.7% or \$0.14 lower compared to 2016. The inflation-adjusted fare revenue shortfall per passenger trip increased each year, and more than tripled in 2020 to end the five-year period at \$8.84; compared to 2016, this represents an increase of \$6.28 that was required from public funding subsidies to cover the cost of each trip.

Capital expenditure is another measure of service level solvency. This indicator reached a ten-year high in 2013, followed by a downward trend through 2018 before trending back upward in 2019 and 2020. Capital expenditure, totaling \$900.2 million in 2020, must be considered in relation to the \$37.7 billion 10-year need to achieve and maintain a state of good repair for the region's assets. Capital program funding remains a critical issue for each Service Board and for the RTA system as a whole.

# Snapshot

Performance Measure	2020 Value	1-Year Trend	5-Year Trend
<b>SERVICE COVERAGE</b>			
Transit Capacity per Capita (trips)	276	↔	↓
Vehicle Revenue Miles per Service Area Square Mile	54,105	↓	↓
Unlinked Passenger Trips (Ridership)	230.9 million	↓	↓
Passenger Trips per Capita	28	↓	↓
Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile	1.16	↓	↓
Passenger Miles Traveled	1.26 billion	↓	↓
<b>SERVICE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS</b>			
Operating Cost per Unit of Transit Capacity	\$0.205	↑	↑
Operating Cost per Vehicle Revenue Mile	\$12.79	↑	↑
Operating Cost per Passenger Trip	\$11.02	↑	↑
Operating Cost per Passenger Mile	\$2.02	↑	↑
<b>SERVICE DELIVERY</b>			
On-Time Performance	84.1%	↔	↓
Reportable Safety & Security Incidents per Million Passenger Trips	2.60	↑	↑
<b>SERVICE MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT</b>			
10-Year Capital Funding Needs	\$3.77 billion	↔	↔
Miles Between Major Mechanical Failures	17,843	↓	↓
Percent of Vehicles Beyond Useful Life	18.6%	↑	N/A
<b>SERVICE LEVEL SOLVENCY</b>			
Fare Revenue per Passenger Trip	\$1.56	↓	↓
Fare Revenue Shortfall per Passenger Trip	\$9.46	↑	↑
Capital Expenditures	\$900.2 million	↑	↑

*Direction of arrows indicates 2020 value in comparison to 2019 (1-year) and to 2016 (5-year) figures. Arrow color indicates whether the change is favorable (green), unfavorable (red), or is equal (black) to comparison figure; changes totaling less than 1% are considered equal to the comparison data and are given black arrows. Operating cost data are adjusted for inflation for the one- and five-year comparison results.*

# Notes/Methodology

1. This analysis is based on 2020 data submitted to the National Transit Database (NTD) by each Service Board. Annual 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). Commuter rail safety incident data is collected from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).
2. Inflation adjustments have been made for monetary measures utilizing the annual Consumer Price Index (Series ID CUURA207SA0, Chicago-Gary-Kenosha) provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The 2023 financial projections include inflation adjustments, using inflation rates of 6.1% for 2021, 4.4% for 2022, and 2.5% for 2023, per the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Survey of Professional Forecasters (accessed September 24, 2021).
3. Area resident (per capita) data is the sum of populations of the six counties that form the RTA service area (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will). US Census Bureau Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2020.
4. 20-year annual capital investment need and 10-year capital funding need by asset type are taken from the Capital Asset Condition 2016: Year 5 Assessment (December 2016).
5. Operating cost measures include those of each Service Board as well as the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), which provides financial oversight, funding, and regional transit planning as well as services such as a Travel Information Center, travel training, and the issuance of reduced fare and free ride permits.
6. This report shows 2016-2020 performance results and projections for selected measures for the year 2023. As done in prior year reports, projections are made using budget assumptions taken from adopted budgets -- in this case, 2021 and 2022 budget assumptions are included and applied to the base 2020 report year data submitted by each Service Board to the National Transit Database. This was done to respond to the unique circumstances that were occurring as this report was under production, e.g., varying mask and social distancing mandates, concerns over virus variants, and shifting expectations from employers about the return to work. Accordingly, budget assumptions proved extraordinarily difficult to construct. **Projections are reported to illustrate the direction of expected performance within the resources of the current operating and financial plans and budget assumptions.**



7. In 2018, CTA changed its methodology for counting standing capacity in its rail cars to more accurately reflect their target rush hour standard. This reporting change resulted in a reduction in the rail car average capacity from 106 to 80, a decrease of 25%, which impacted the two measures that include capacity within this report: transit capacity per capita and operating cost per unit of transit capacity.
8. In 2019, Metra refined its methodology for counting passenger trips taken. This reporting change resulted in an additional Metra ridership reduction of roughly 7% for 2019 impacted each measure that includes ridership. Ensuing years will maintain this methodology change.
9. COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. In the following days, Illinois' Governor Pritzker signed a statewide Stay-At-Home order on March 21, a sweeping mandate that restricted business operations and functions to essential activities. Public transportation ridership took an immediate plunge and remained low throughout the order, which ended May 29. However, systemwide ridership stayed historically low in ensuing months as work and social trips continued to be curtailed. Additionally, social unrest activities throughout the summer of 2020 negatively impacted service provision and demand. Another, less restrictive Stay-At-Home Advisory was implemented in November as COVID-19 cases surged, prompting another round of restrictions and impacting ridership. The pandemic's impact on public transportation ridership remains significant; at the time of this report (February 2022) systemwide ridership has improved to roughly half of 2019 levels.

# Results

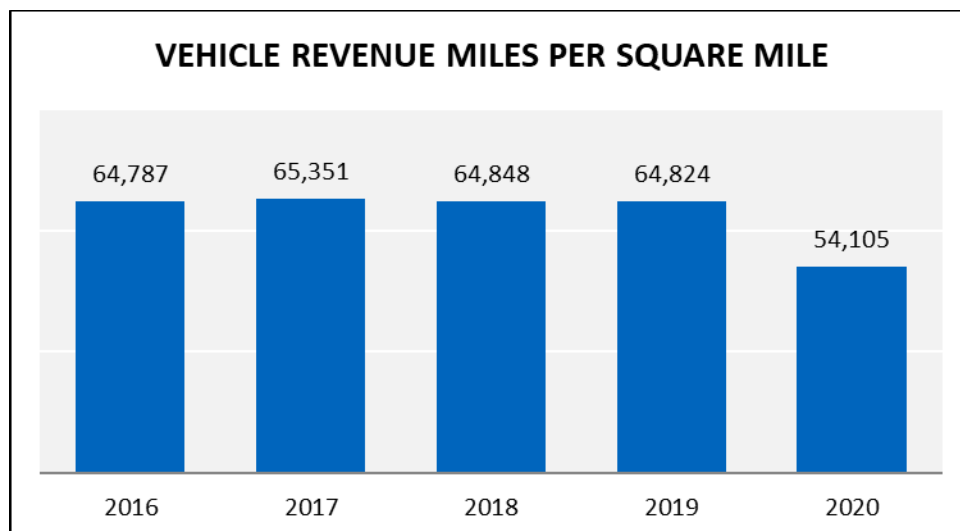
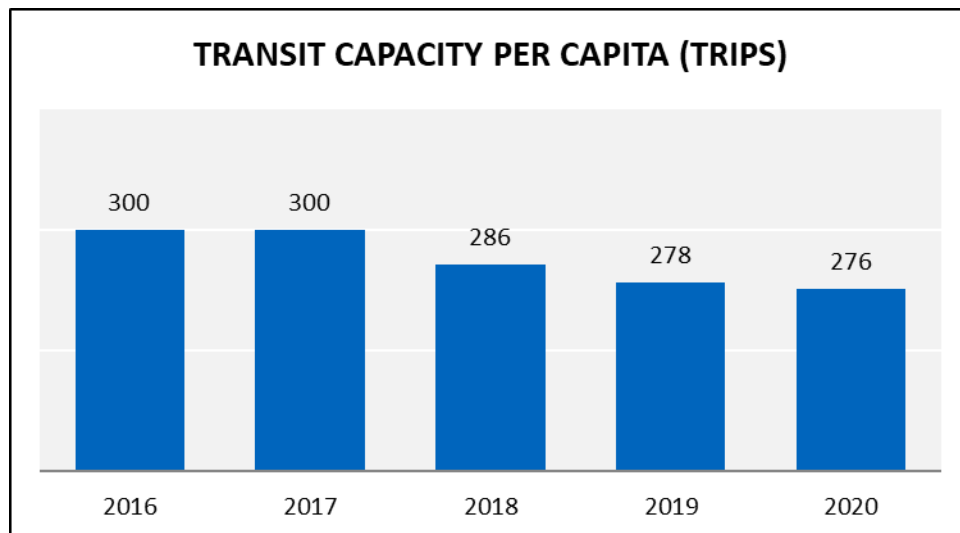
## Service Coverage

### Transit Capacity per Capita

The amount of available service, as measured by average vehicle capacity and vehicle revenue miles, per person in the region.

### Vehicle Revenue Miles per Square Mile

The total number of miles traveled annually by CTA, Metra, and Pace per square mile of the six-county region.



# Results

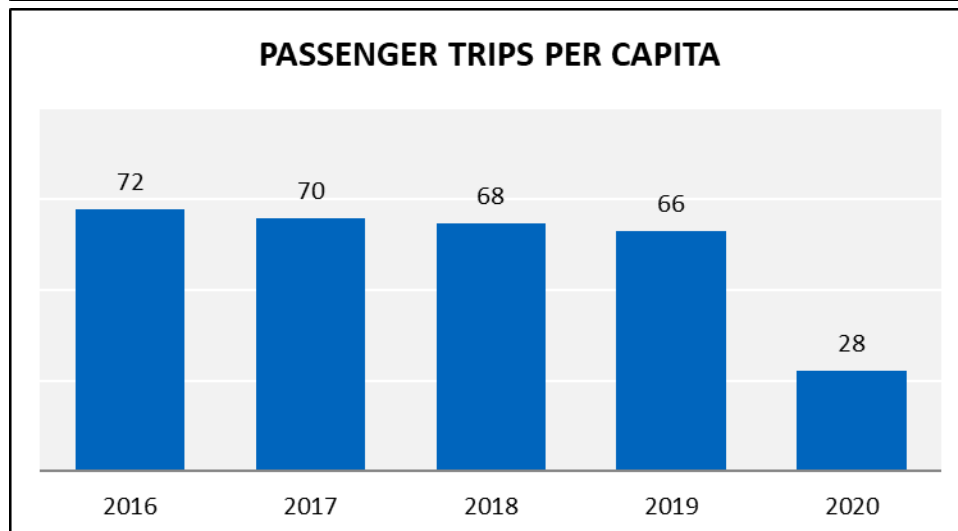
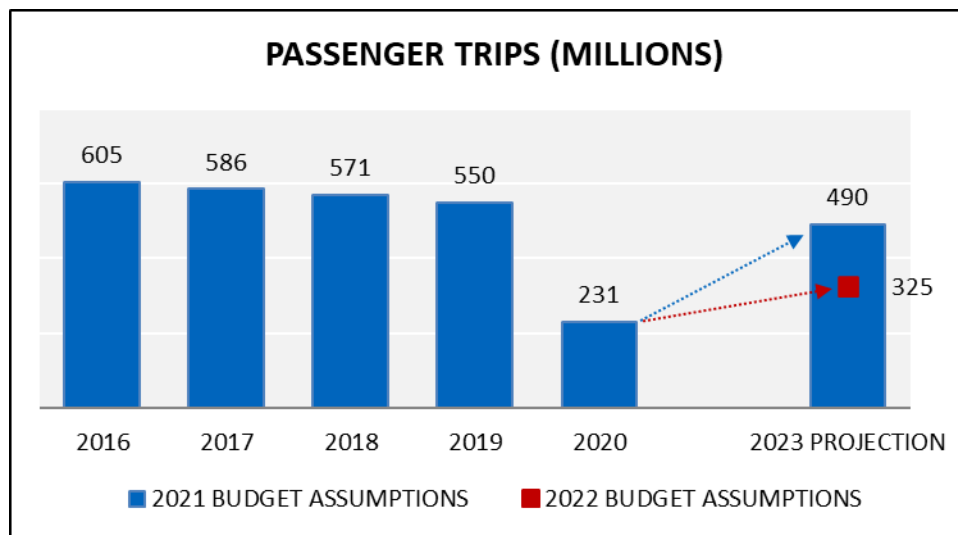
## Service Coverage

### Unlinked Passenger Trips

Also known as 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. See Notes/Methodology (p. 6, point 6) for explanation of projections.

### Passenger Trips per Capita

The average number of rides taken per resident annually.



# Results

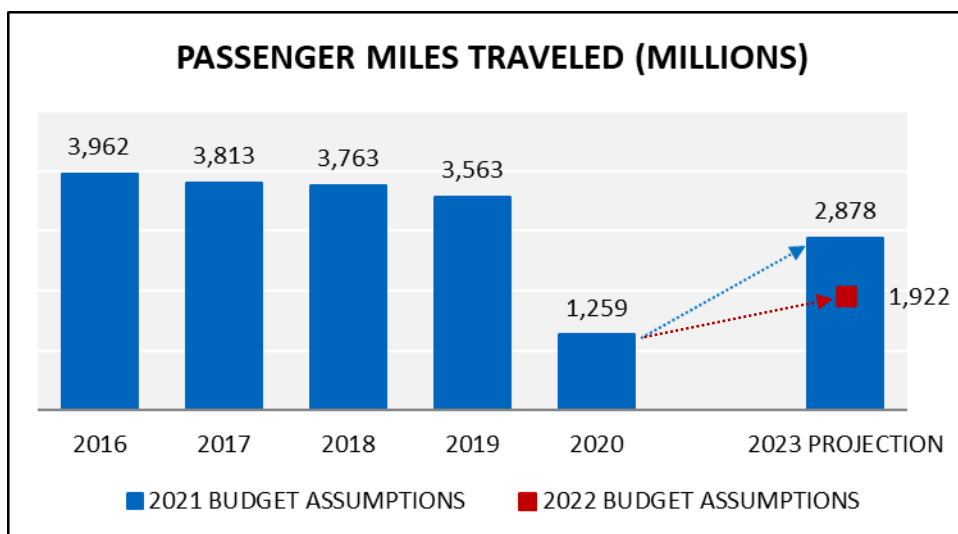
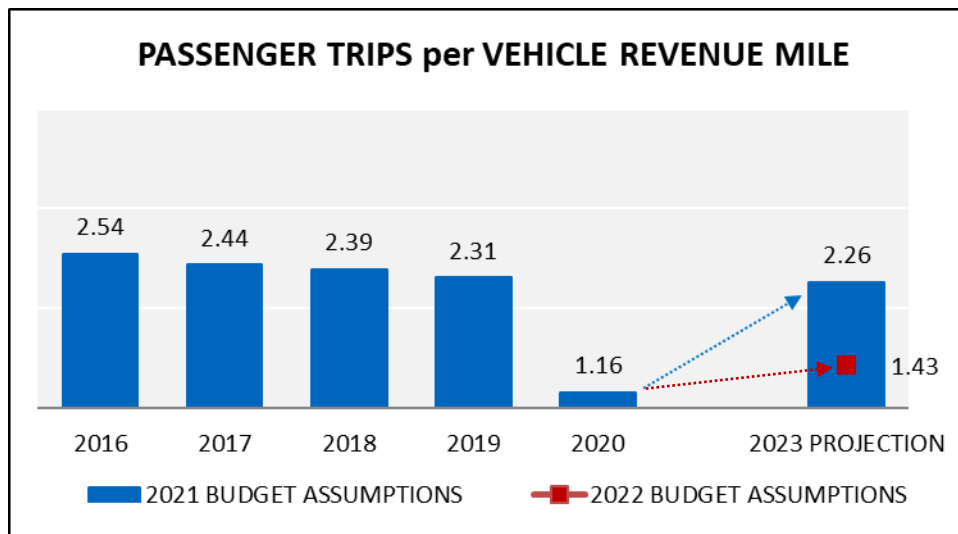
## Service Coverage

### Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile

The number of passenger trips divided by the miles that vehicles travel while in revenue service.

### Passenger Miles Traveled

The cumulative sum of the distance ridden by passengers.



# Results

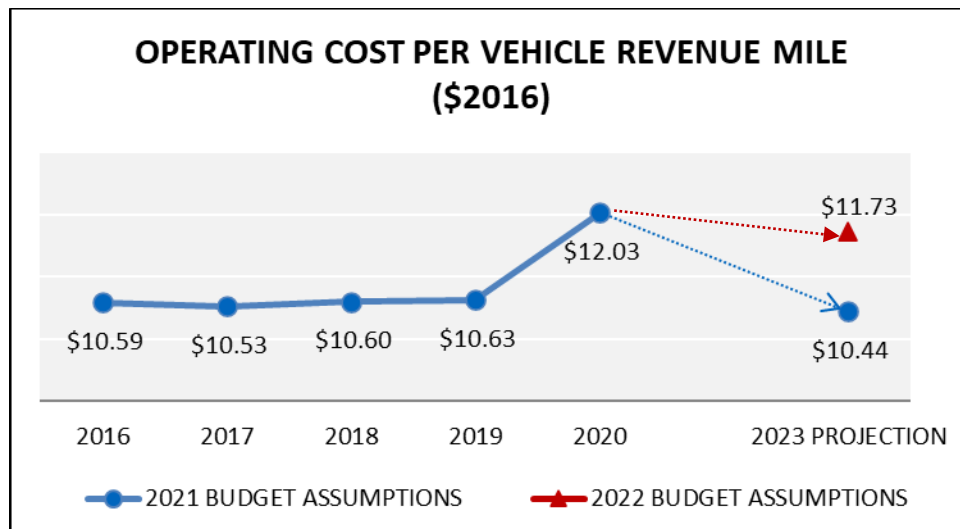
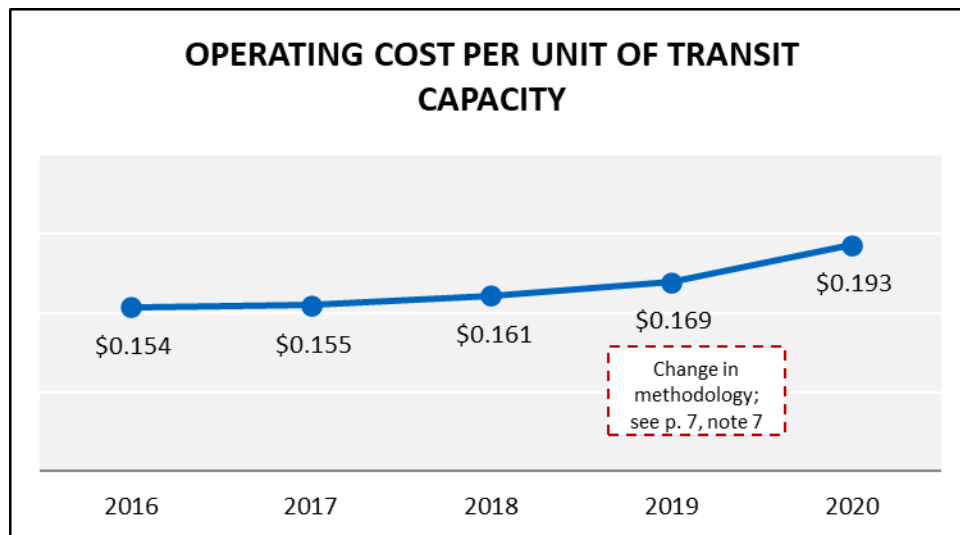
## Service Efficiency & Effectiveness

### Operating Cost per Unit of Transit Capacity

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 Vehicle Revenue Mile

The average cost of providing each vehicle revenue mile of service.



# Results

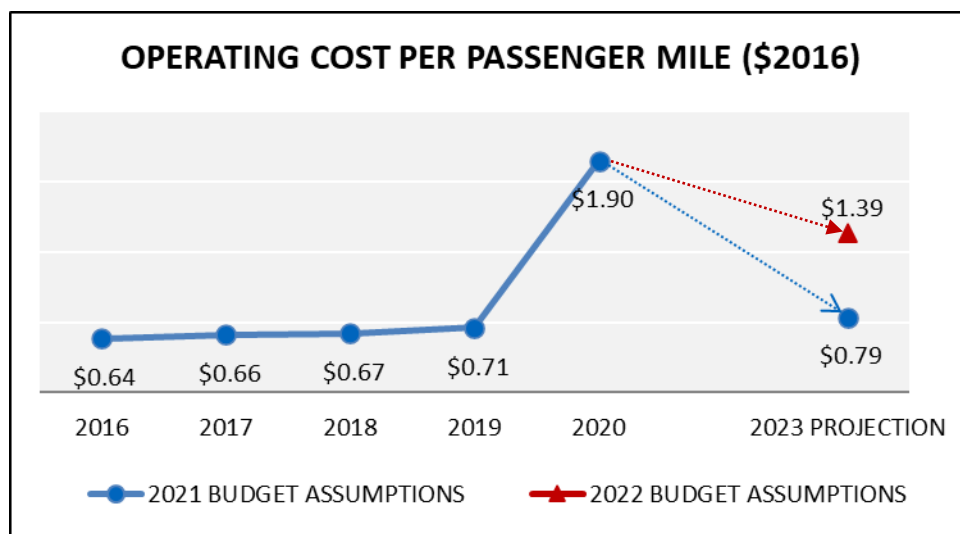
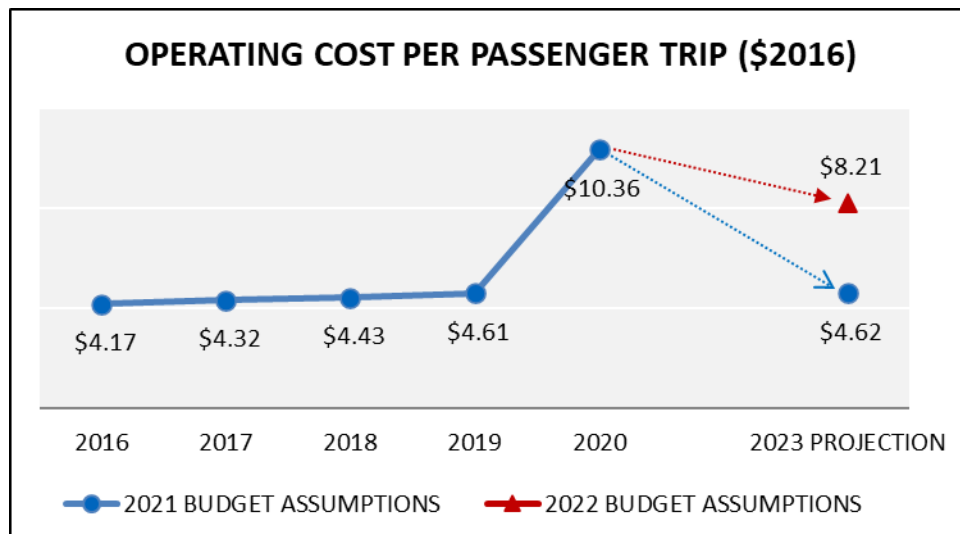
## Service Efficiency and Effectiveness

### Operating Cost per Passenger Trip

The total operating cost divided by the total number of unlinked passenger trips taken on public transit vehicles.

### Operating Cost per Passenger Mile

The total operating cost divided by the total number of miles traveled by passengers.



# Results

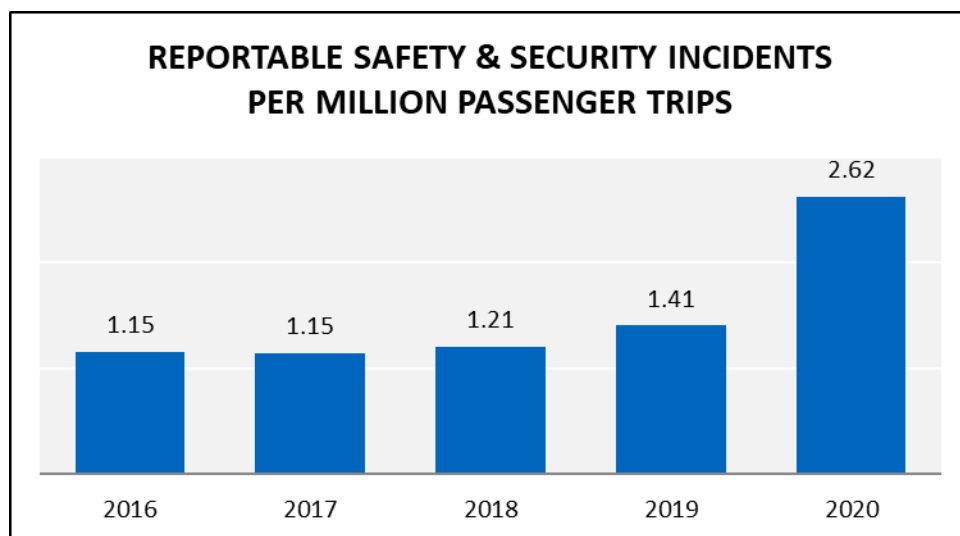
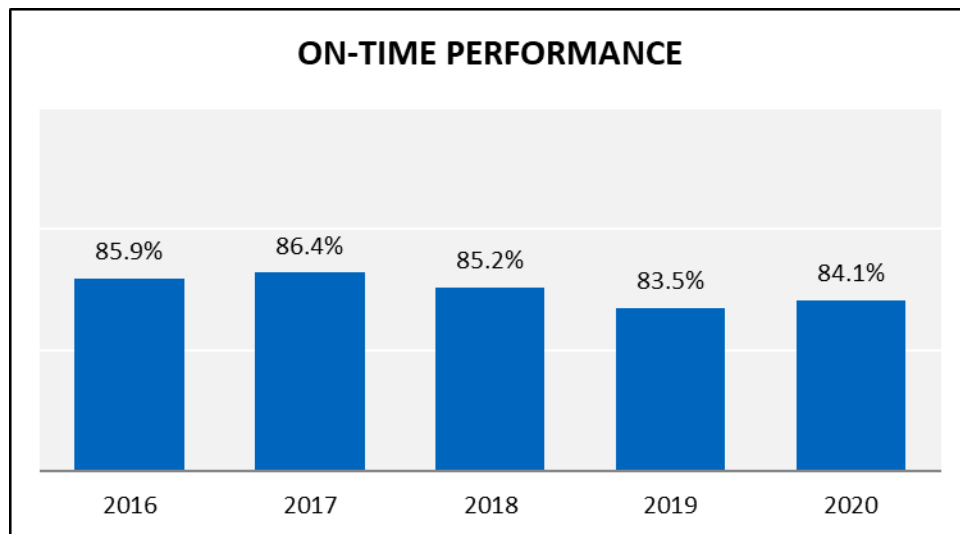
## Service Delivery

### On-Time Performance

The percentage of time that revenue service vehicles are considered on schedule, based on each Service Board's on-time performance measurement definition.

### Reportable Safety and Security Incidents per Million Passenger Trips

The number of major reportable safety and security incidents per million passenger trips taken.



# Results

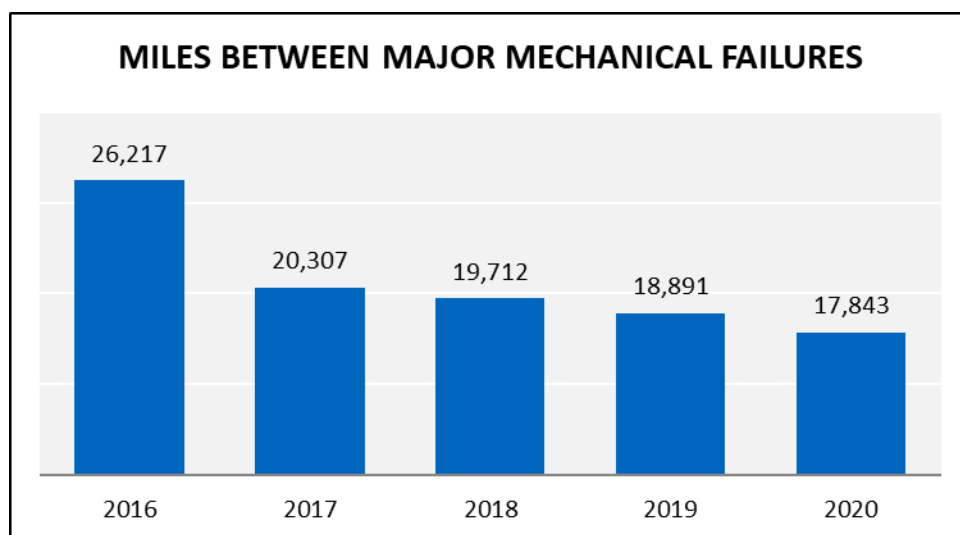
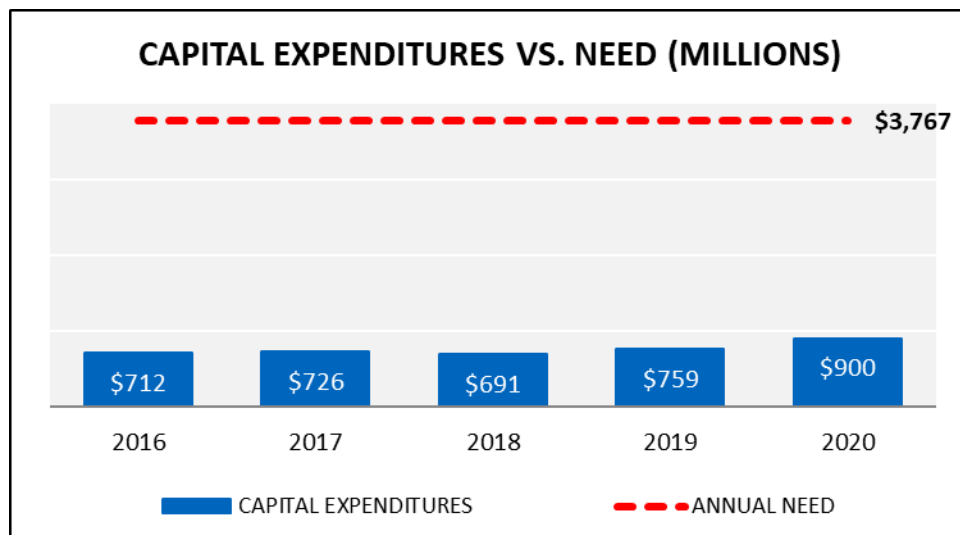
## Service Maintenance & Capital Investment

### Capital Expenditures vs. Need

Actual capital expenditures per year compared to the estimated cost of bringing RTA system-wide assets into a state of good repair over the next ten years, expressed as an annual figure that reflects a total of \$19.3 billion in backlog projects and \$18.3 billion for regular replacement and maintenance projects.

### Miles Between Major Mechanical Failures

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.



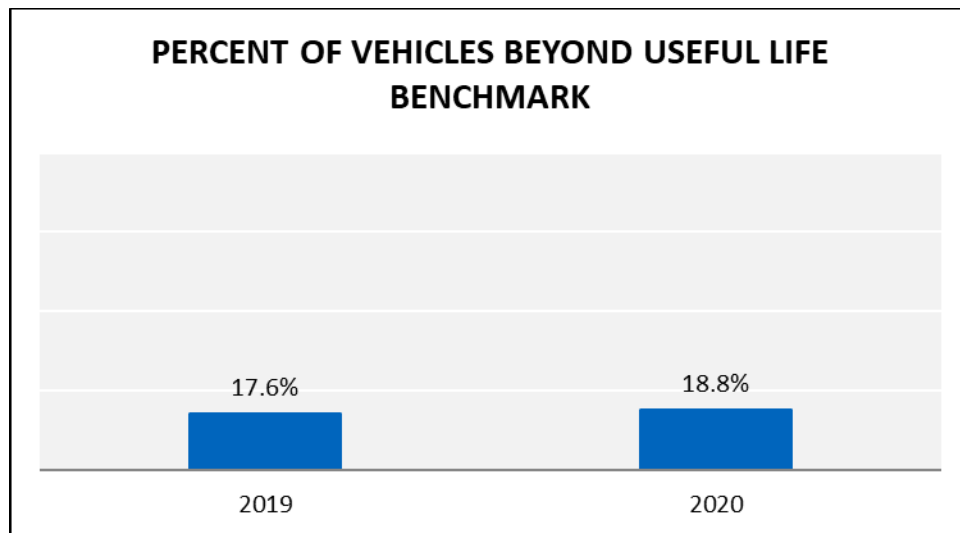


# Results

## Service Maintenance & Capital Investment

### Percent of Vehicles Beyond Useful Life Benchmark

Beginning in 2019, a new metric was introduced to reflect the percentage 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, which takes into account unique operating environments and circumstances. 2019 and later results are not comparable to prior years, so those are excluded in the five-year trend reporting.



# Results

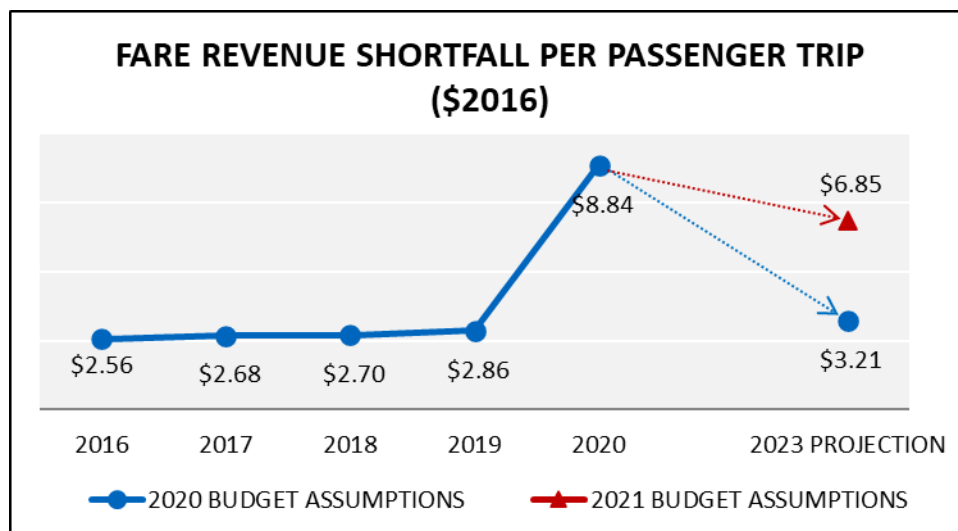
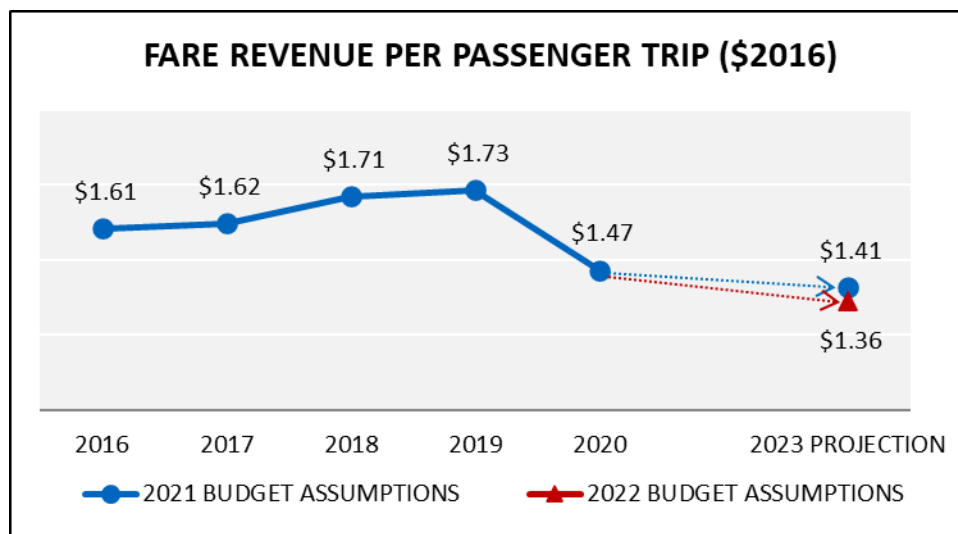
## Service Level Solvency

### Fare Revenue per Passenger Trip

The average fare paid by customers per trip.

### Fare Revenue Shortfall per Passenger Trip

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).



# Results

## Service Level Solvency

### Operations Funding Sources

Operating costs are covered by fare revenue, other directly-generated revenue (advertising, concessions, etc.), and all other revenue (local, state, and federal).

### Capital Expenditures

The expenses related to purchasing or upgrading physical assets such as property, buildings, or equipment. Expenditures are shown over a 10-year time frame to illustrate the wide variability from year to year and over time.

