



# Attachment B

## Fare-Free Transit Assessment

### Executive Summary

#### September 2022



In early June, Mayor Regina Romero and Vice Mayor Lane Santa Cruz directed staff to conduct additional research regarding transit fares, and to include the following information and data:

- Understanding the data available to us and gaps in data that is required
- Scan of what other jurisdictions are doing to provide fare-free transit
- Community engagement that offers stakeholders the opportunity to voice their concerns and desires, and to develop solutions

Leadership also requested the following data to make the most informed decision possible:

- Ridership data over the past 10 years on a year-by-year basis, then on a month-to-month basis beginning in 2019
- Ridership data for other mass transit systems to benchmark Sun Tran's
- Safety/incident rates over the past 10 years on a year-by-year basis with a breakdown by incident type (for example, fare box disputes, mask mandate, drugs and alcohol, mental health issues), to the extent possible. Break down by certain bus routes, thus requiring a more tailored response
- Proactive measures taken prior to the pandemic, and during the pandemic, to address safety issues
- Staffing levels for bus drivers over the past 10 years, on a year-by-year basis
- The cost to reinstate fares, including but not limited to administrative costs to run a low-income assistance program, and maintenance of fare-collection infrastructure
- The impact of fares on dwell time, meaning the time it takes a bus to stop to load and unload passengers and for them to pay fares
- Other pertinent data to the discussion

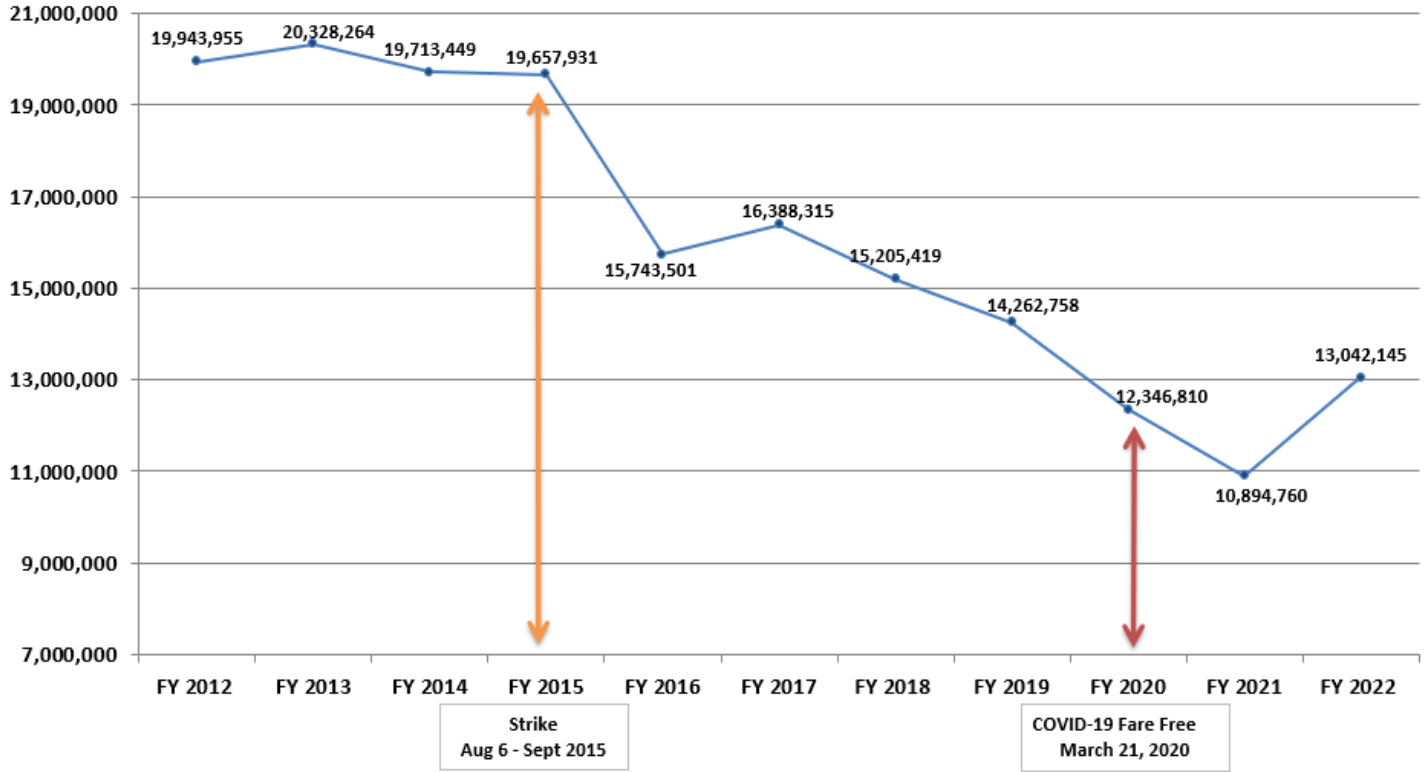
Additionally, city leadership asked staff to conduct significant outreach that should encompass community townhalls held in each ward along with a city-wide survey. This should also include drivers and operators as well as Teamsters Local 104.

The following Executive Summary includes additional research (**Local Public Outreach and Benchmarking Other Systems**) in this packet of information and addresses questions in the original memo dated June 6, 2022, to City Manager, Mike Ortega and DTM Director, Sam Credio. The first part addresses the non-security related requests listed above, while the second part (**Transit Security Synopsis**) addresses the security related items needed regardless of fare collection status.

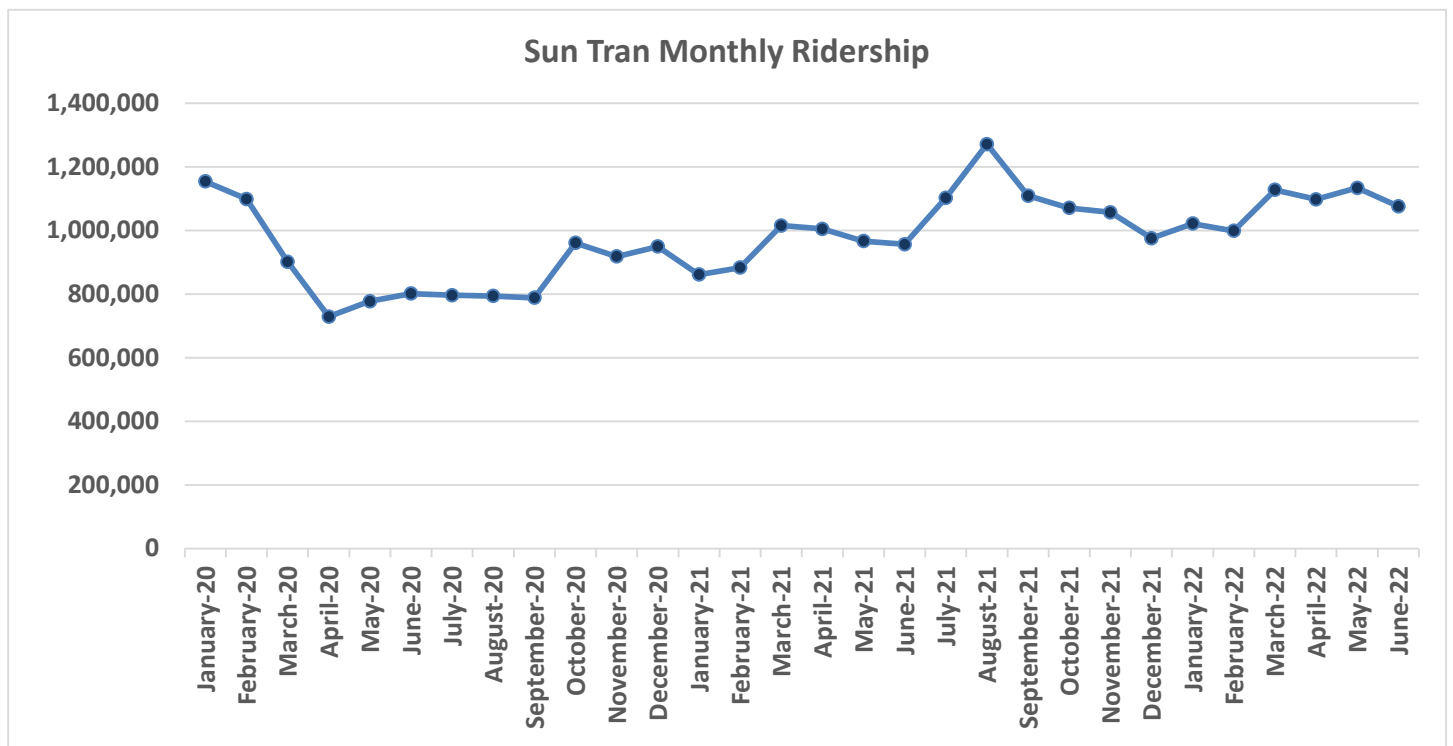
# Sun Tran Ridership – 10 Year and Monthly

Fixed route ridership, which initially saw a large decrease at the start of the pandemic, has recovered in the intervening years, almost matching pre-pandemic levels. Yearly ridership data for FY 2012 – FY 2022 is provided below:

**Sun Tran Annual Ridership**

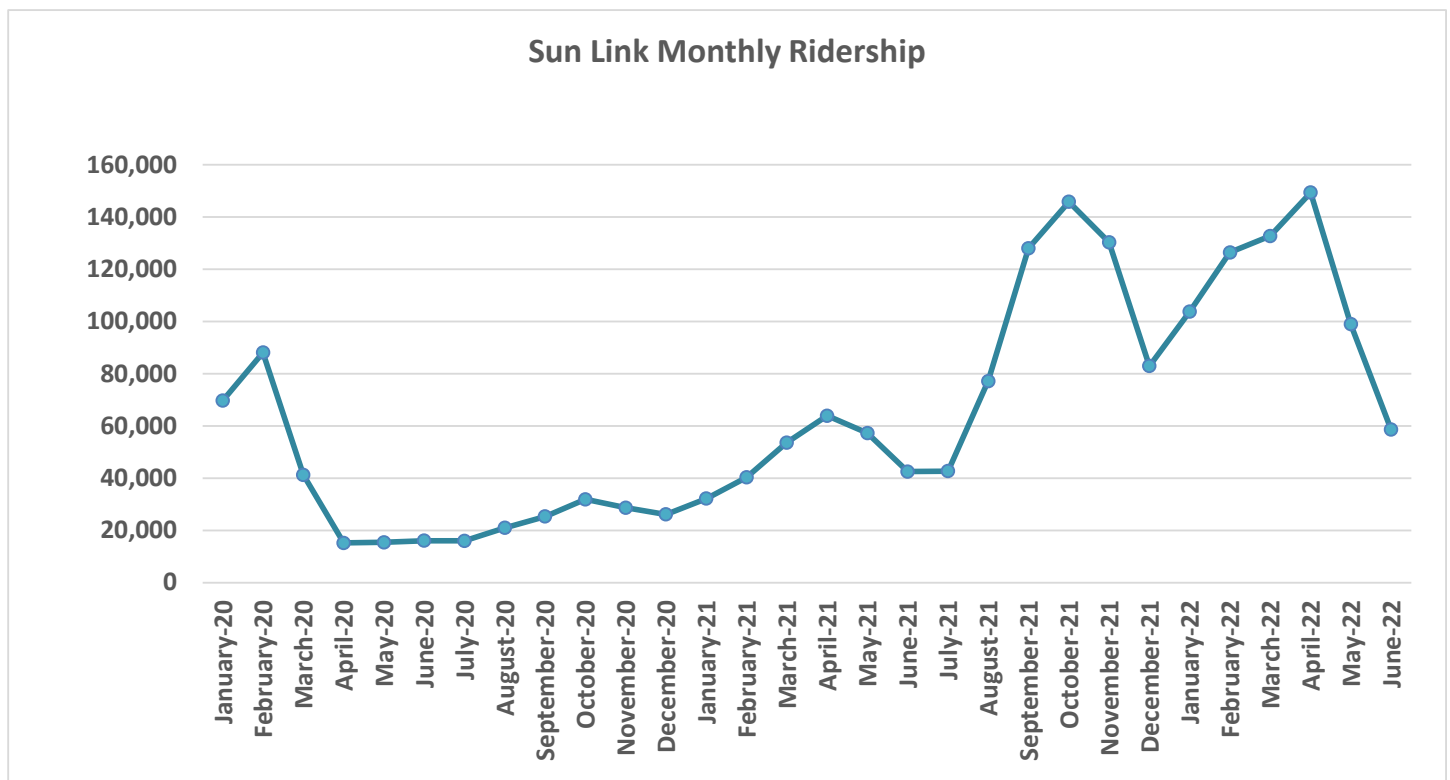
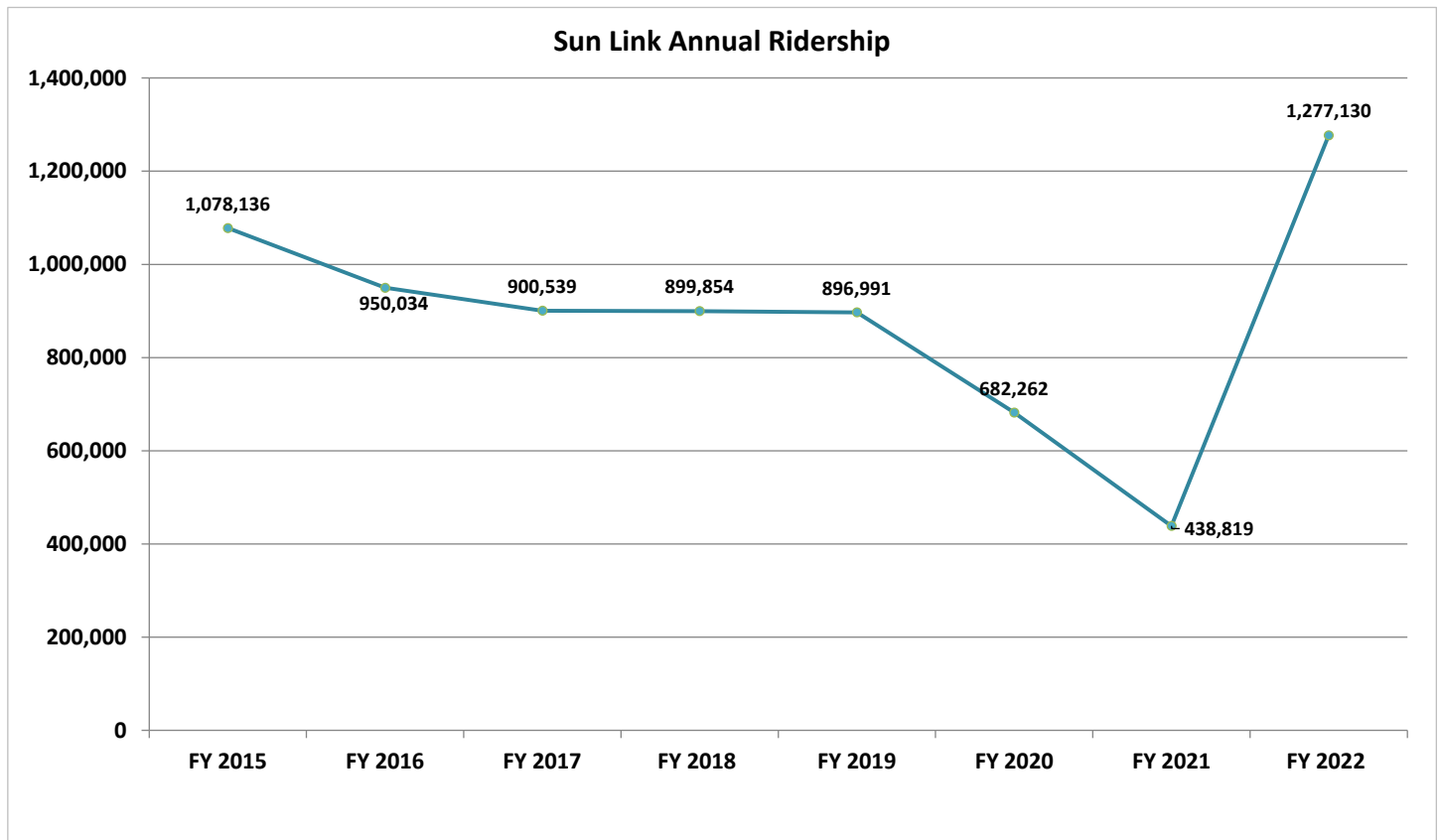


**Sun Tran Monthly Ridership**



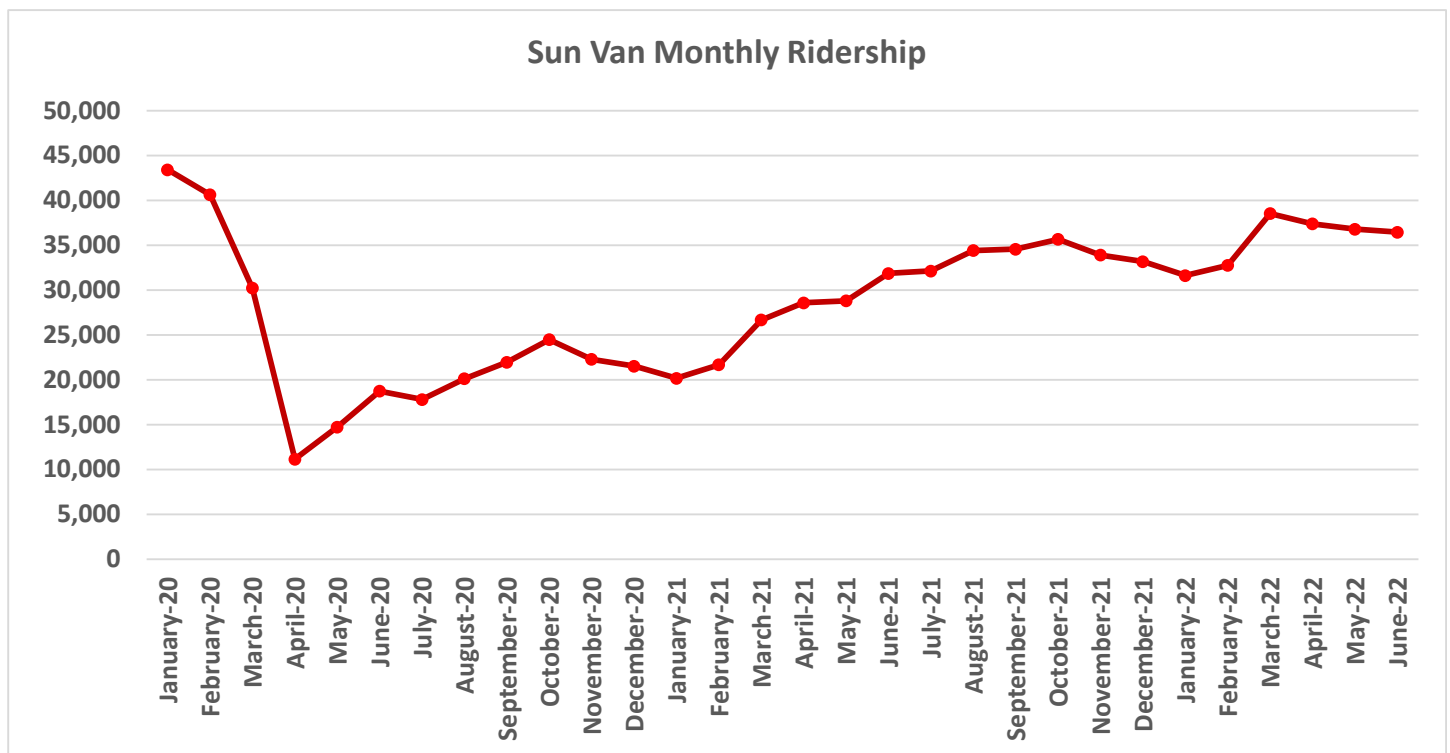
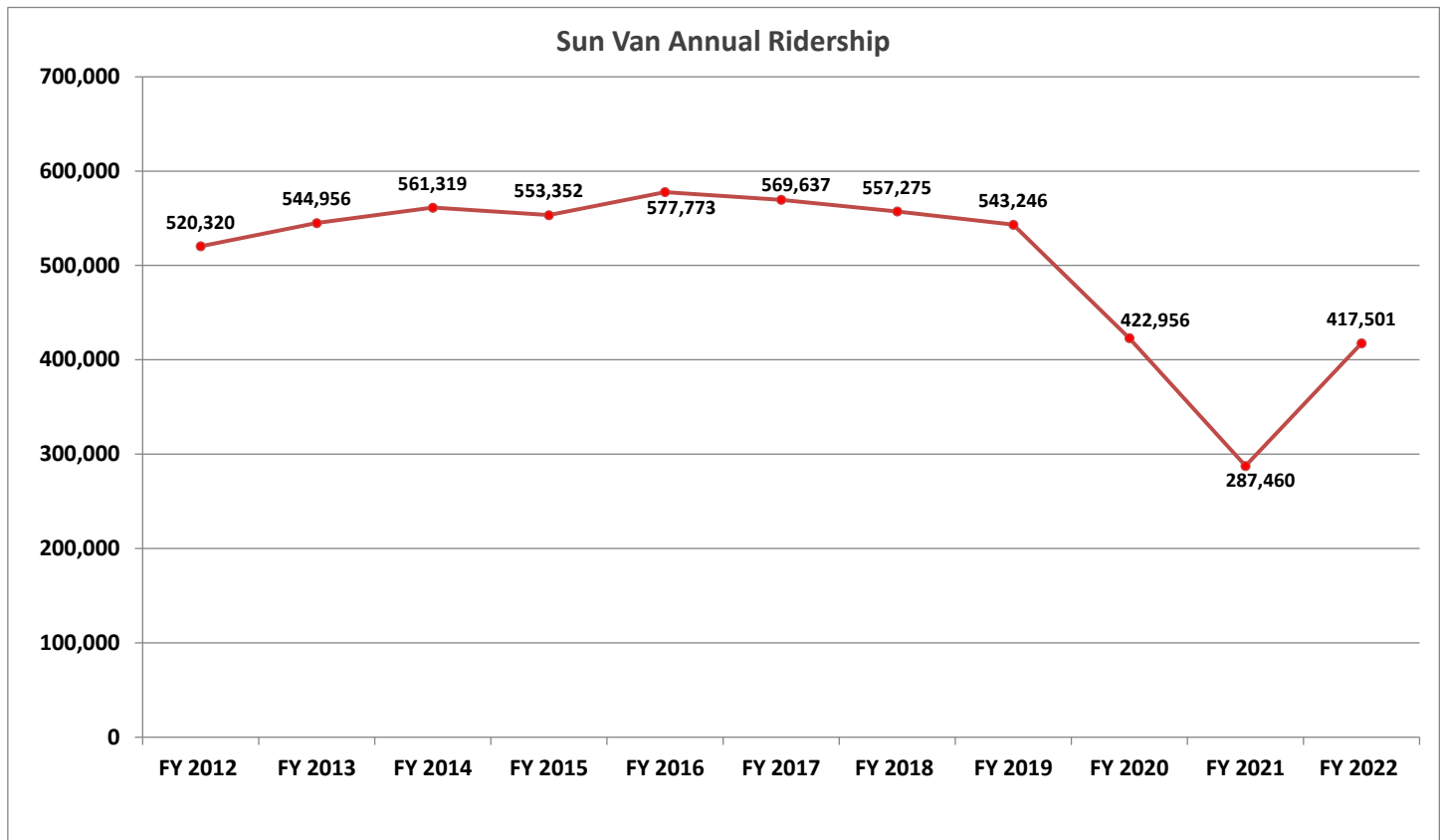
# Sun Link Ridership – 10 Year and Monthly

Sun Link ridership has seen record breaking numbers since being made free at the start of the pandemic. Yearly ridership data is provided below:



# Sun Van Ridership – 10 Year and Monthly

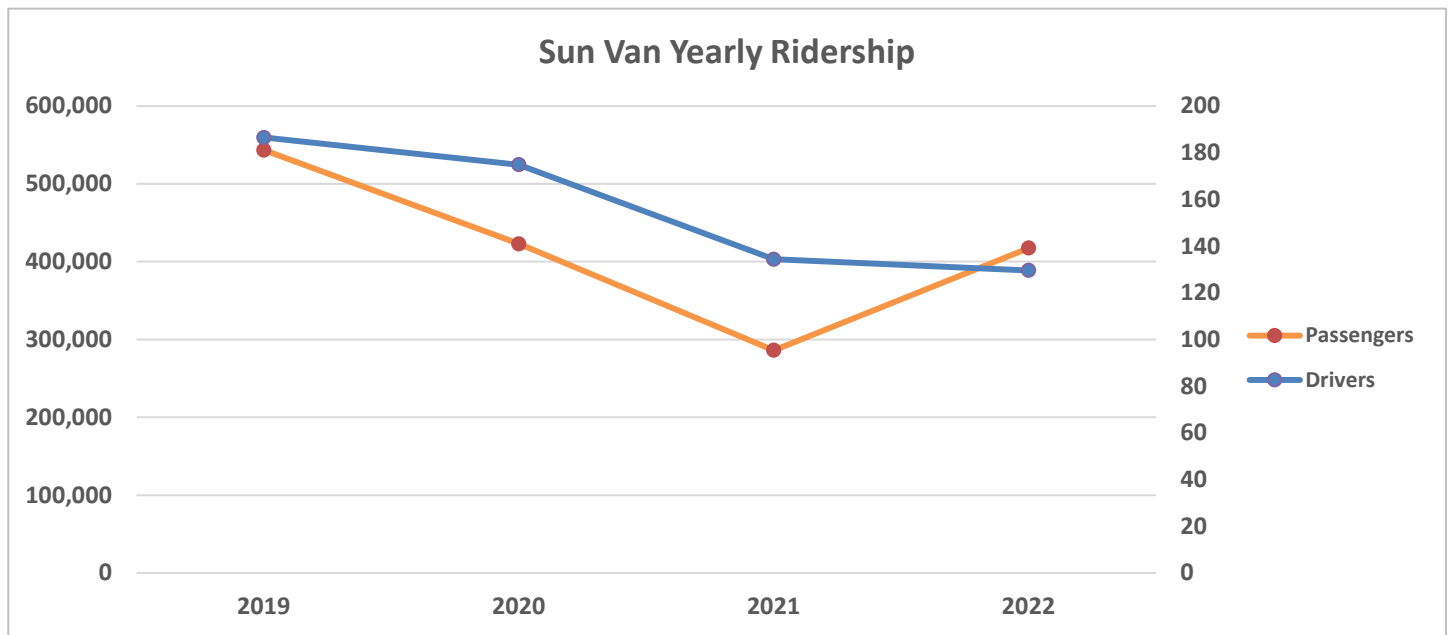
Sun Van Paratransit ridership has also recovered, with new demand straining system resources. Yearly ridership data for FY 2012 – FY 2022 is provided below:



More detailed information can be found in **Appendix A**, titled “Transit System Review”. **Appendix A** also includes month-by-month ridership data starting in FY 2019 as requested by city leadership. All ridership data was taken from automated passenger counters located on system vehicles.

Based on the data above, we can conclude that having gone to a fare-free system, Sun Link has seen the greatest growth in ridership, but we are also now seeing Sun Van grow as well, which brings some challenges related to hiring enough drivers to meet recovering demand.

With ridership continuing to increase, and the continued lack of drivers, Sun Van’s accessibility has diminished which has left some customers unsatisfied. The graph below details ridership continuing to increase while the number of drivers has not kept pace and has essentially flatlined.



## Fare Study

The COVID-19 public health crisis presented Tucson’s public transportation system with unique operational challenges. Ridership sharply declined as customers stayed home or chose other modes of transport, while simultaneously customers who continued to ride the system were faced with unprecedented economic hardship. City leadership responded by suspending fare collection and Sun Tran instituted new policies to make riding the bus as safe as possible for those still using its essential services.

During this period, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) released competitive grant funding through the “Public Transportation COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program.” Seeing an opportunity to rethink the regional fare collection system, the City and Sun Tran applied for and were awarded a grant to pursue the following goals:

- Upgrade the existing fare payment systems to allow riders more options to pay fares using media beyond SunGo and cash.
- Examine options for contactless multi-modal payment systems to reduce interaction between the operator and rider, mitigating exposure and building rider confidence.

- Install automated wheelchair securement systems to improve the mobility, confidence, and independence of non-ambulatory riders.
- Providing a simplified fare structure to reduce complexity for customers.

As part of the project, the following activities took place:

- Completion of a transit fare analysis of the current fare structure and fare media, focusing on touch-less fare payment.
- Examination of options to modify the regional system fare-boxes to accept all touchless payment forms to include QR code validators and future contactless payment methods.

The attached “Sun Tran Fare Study – Appendix C” has identified options that will allow staff and city leadership to find an equitable solution for system riders. A new fare policy supported by improved technology gives us options to retain a stable income stream while simultaneously providing economic relief to those who need it and easier fare payment options for all. The study also demonstrates that remaining fare free is a viable option with potential benefits.

## **Benchmarking Peer Transit Systems**

Sun Tran examined 12 fare-free peer transit systems and five fare-collecting peer transit systems to compare with Sun Tran and Sun Van. These agencies were chosen by comparing overall statistics, the similarity of Tucson’s ridership, and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main areas of interest were an examination of fare collection policies and their effects on transit systems’ fixed route and paratransit ridership, community impacts and benefits, safety and security, funding sources, fare-free implementation, and any other details gleaned from conversations, news articles, agency websites, and other sources. The full comparative report that reviews other transit systems is titled “Benchmarking Other Systems – Appendix D” and is included in the portfolio of reports accompanying this summary.

Most of the transit systems reviewed are still experiencing lower ridership or are still below pre-COVID levels. Of the transit systems included in this report, 88% (15) are below pre-COVID levels for fixed routes and 82% (14) of transit systems are below pre-COVID levels for paratransit. The effect fare-free had on an increase in ridership is negligible; however, it is important to note that other external factors may have prevented individuals from using public transportation, such as mask mandates, COVID-19 regulations, and restrictions, reduction in overall service levels, or limited-service hours. Transit systems that had implemented fare-free service before COVID did see an increase in their ridership numbers, however, it was a gradual increase from year to year. Driver and operator shortages are prevalent and directly impact the amount of service an agency can provide. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the transit systems examined reported a shortage in drivers, either for fixed route, paratransit, or both. Increases in salaries and incentives were incorporated but have done little to attract potential employees.

During the COVID pandemic most transit systems suspended fare collection. Since the relative decline of COVID most systems have returned to fare collection. However, a select number of transit systems have continued to operate fare free and are considering remaining free. This benchmarking exercise surveys the peer systems who, like Tucson, are considering remaining fare free. The

systems surveyed for this project have the greatest similarity to Tucson in either size or demographics. Of the 17 transit systems included in this comparative report, nine systems are continuing fare-free services through 2022 (including Sun Tran), with some extending to 2023 (six transit systems) or through 2025 (two transit systems). Three transit systems never offered free fares, three transit systems have reverted to fares, two transit systems offered fare-free services prior to the onset of the pandemic, and one transit system has offered a six-month fare-free pilot program that starts and ends in 2022. Of the three systems that have reverted to fare collection, at least one of them has started a six-month pilot of a new reduced fare structure (Table 1).

**Table 1: Fare Options Available from the 17 Transit Systems of Comparative Study**

Fare Options	Number of Transit Systems	Transit Systems
Already offered fare-free	2	Corvallis Transit System, Chapel Hill Transit
Started fare-free during the onset of the pandemic (2020); continue to offer	8	Greater Richmond Transit Company, Go Triangle, Go Raleigh, Go Durham, Go Cary, ABQ Ride, Intercity Transit, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, SunTran
Started fare-free after 2020	1	CTtransit
Started fare-free during the pandemic (2020); have reverted back to fare structure	3	Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority, Memphis Regional Transit Authority, New Orleans Regional Transit Authority
Never offered fare-free	3	Jacksonville Transit Authority, Sun Metro, Embark

The pandemic related changes to the traditional fare-structure have allowed transit systems the opportunity to pilot new fare structures, engage in feedback from their community members and partner organizations, and identify new funding sources as desire to continue to fund fare-free transit gains momentum.

When comparing the dedicated sources of funding for each of the systems, it is important to note that many of the transit systems that are either already fare-free or include plans to continue beyond 2022 have diverse sources of funding including earmarked state funds from a mixture of state-level fees,



taxes, or general budget support. In these cases the funding sources were identified prior to going fare free. Several fare-free systems also have support from local University partners. When comparing the funding sources of the City of Tucson’s Sun Tran, it most closely aligns with that of Oklahoma City’s Embark system in that there is no dedicated source of funding as CARES and American Rescue Plan monies phase out of operating budgets. Oklahoma City’s Embark system never offered free fares during the onset or continuation of the pandemic.

Successful new funding ventures took place in a number of city transit systems and included partnerships with universities (including student/employee fees to double contributions), private development partnerships, and state vehicles and rental car taxes and fees. However, at this time, there is no immediately identifiable source of funding for the continuation of free fares, outside of the City of Tucson’s general funds.

Below is a table of the systems that were reviewed (Table 2):

<b>Systems surveyed:</b>	<u>GoDurham</u> (Durham, NC)	<u>CTtransit</u> (State Department, CT)
GRTC (Richmond, VA)	<u>GoCary</u> (Cary, NC)	MATA (Memphis, TN)
CTS (Corvallis, OR)	TARA (Toledo, OH)	JTA (Jacksonville, FL)
CHT (Chapel Hill, NC)	ABQ Ride (Albuquerque, NM)	<u>SunMetro</u> (El Paso, TX)
<u>GoTriangle</u> (North Carolina)	Intercity Transit (Olympia, WA)	RTA (New Orleans, LA)
<u>GoRaleigh</u> (Raleigh, NC)	KCATA (Kansas City, MO)	COTPA (Oklahoma City, OK)

**Table 2: Transit Systems Overview on Three Dimensions: Community Impacts & Benefits, Safety & Security, and Funding Sources**

**Community Impacts & Benefits:**

- Seventy-five percent of the fare-free transit systems received overwhelmingly positive support from the public, community organizations, non-profit and political leaders.
- While ridership was not heavily impacted by fare-free service it did make it easier for riders to get on and off, as well as encouraging new riders to try the system and see if it works for them.
- Transit systems created fliers and marketed free fares to inform the public and encourage ridership.
- Eighty percent of those surveyed (1,991 out of 2,490) support a continuation of fare-free service in Tucson.
- The biggest benefits of fare-free service, as identified by survey respondents (2,711 comments) are Accessible transportation for all, good for the environment, and one less worry for people struggling during the pandemic.

- Issues about safety, reliability, improved service and security have been the top concerns (1,943 comments) coming from the public and operators. These issues are comparable to the concerns mentioned by the other transit systems and their riders.
- One issue that was heard specifically from Sun Tran riders was how confusing and frustrating the fare structure was for riders to understand which is solved with a fare-free service or at least a reduced and less complicated fare structure.

### **Safety & Security:**

- Seventy-seven percent of transit systems analyzed primarily use local law enforcement as their main security force to assist in dealing with transit incidents compared to 18% of transit systems that use contracted security services only. One transit system utilizes Crisis Counselors to help riders instead of calling law enforcement.
- Forty-seven percent of transit systems saw an increase in non-destination riders, however, agencies enacted ride-to-destination rules that prevented users from continuously riding one line, requiring they get off at least one stop before the end of the line.
- Fifty-nine percent of transit systems saw an increase in non-violent incidents involving passengers or operators.
- Twenty-four percent of transit systems saw an increase in violent incidents involving passengers or operators.
- Transit systems that were surveyed also created ride-to-destination rules, as well as implemented no-smoking and anti-loitering laws to help reduce the number of security calls and incidents.
- Some transit systems created an aggressive code of conduct for the riders and were able to ban or exclude individuals from the bus if it was shown they had repeatedly violated the system rules.
- Sun Tran has put many of these safety practices mentioned by other transit systems into use already, whether it be increasing security force and presence in downtown hubs and transit centers, increasing safety and security training, not limited just to operators but road supervisors and admin staff as well, improving security infrastructure, and increasing overall security awareness to riders and users of the transit system.

## **Funding Sources:**

- Fifty-nine percent (10) of all transit systems included in the analysis had at least one source of dedicated funding (local sales tax, property tax, gas tax, etc.).
- Twenty-four percent (4) had at least one private or outside business partnerships.
- Transit systems were able to receive grants and funding from local or state governments.
- The biggest concerns from transit systems were about where to find funding and how much would be needed in order to cover farebox revenue.
- Sun Tran has neither a direct source of funding or outside partnerships to make up for the revenue lost by stopping fare collections.

## **Community Outreach as of September 15th 2022**

On behalf of the City of Tucson, Sun Tran staff hosted eight (8) public open house events (seven (7) in-person and one virtual), and eight (8) pop-up events at Laos and Ronstadt Transit Center with two additional pop ups at UArizona to obtain public input on the future of fares. The community had the opportunity to provide input on the future of fares and take a paper survey.

A total of fifty-four (54) people attended the meetings hosted in local libraries, ward offices, tribal facilities and virtually. The engagement at the pop-ups has been high. At the Laos Transit Center thirty-seven (37) surveys were completed and return, while fifty-nine (59) were collected at Ronstadt Transit Center.

In addition to the in-person meetings above, Sun Tran, Sun Express, Sun Shuttle, Sun Van, Sun On Demand, and Sun Link promoted the events and the fare survey by implementing the following:

- Information posted at all three transit centers
- Strip cards on every route
- Posters located on all transit vehicles including Sun Tran, Sun Express, Sun Shuttle, Sun Van, Sun On Demand, and Sun Link
- Regional transit website [suntran.com](http://suntran.com)
- Social media post (see below)
- Media Releases on 7/5 and 7/25
- Constant Contact email link to over 9500+ persons in our database

Local media also ran multiple stories to promote the events and to take the survey including a live interview on KOLD Noon Notebook segment:

Media Outlet	Number of Stories Ran
KOLD/KMSB	17
KVOA	22
KVOI-AM KGUN	1 and 3
KHRR	2
Tucson Sentinel and Wilcat	2 and 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>

Sun Tran posted several stories to their social media where it was shared by the community:

Sun Tran Social Media	Number of Post	Reach/ Shares
Facebook	19	32 shares (combined)
Instagram	36	4,515 reach (combined), 77 stories shared, 18 saved post
Twitter	10	31 retweets (combined)

The following community partners shared information in various ways, through newsletters, email blasts, social media, and other channels:

- Ward 1, 3, 4 and 6
- News Net feature on 7/21 & 8/8
- Downtown Tucson Partnership (e-blast and website)
- Tucson House
- Tucson Unified School District to over 17,440 emails in six languages
- University of Arizona (UA Announce and LO Que Pasa, The Daily Wildcat), ASUA and various clubs and organizations.

All communications were in English and Spanish to ensure the entire population had access to the information

- Pima Community College newsletter, intranet page websystems to over 19,800 students, staff and faculty
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce shared the survey on their platforms.
- Public Transit Advocate Newsletter via Suzanne Schafer

The open house events dates, times, locations, and attendance are listed below:

Public Input Open Houses			
7/11/2022	12 – 1 pm	Flowing Wells Library	7
7/12/2022	12 – 1 pm	Ward 2 Office	1
7/13/2022	5 – 6 pm	Miller-Golf Links Library	3
7/14/2022	5:30 – 6:30 pm	Ward 1 Office	8
7/18/2022	1 – 2 pm	Quincie Douglas Library	6
7/19/2022	12 – 1pm	Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation	4
7/20/2022	12:30 – 1:30 pm	Joel D. Valdez Main Library	20
7/21/2022	6 – 7 pm	Virtual Meeting	5
<b>Total Attendees</b>			<b>54</b>

## Results of Community Outreach

### Fare Survey Result Summary, as of September 15, 2022

The Sun Tran Fare Study Survey began July 11, 2022, the city-wide efforts included having open houses in every ward, and at transit centers. Currently five thousand five hundred and ninety four **(5,594)** public surveys have been completed. The survey was hosted through Survey Monkey, made available online, and paper surveys were provided at all events, and at transit centers. The survey is available in English and Spanish, both online and paper format. The survey has been included in all marketing efforts, links have been posted though social media and QR codes were used on all print material.

**Below are key findings from the Sun Tran Fare Study Survey:**

**Do you think Sun Tran (and other transit) services should keep fare-free for everyone in the future? (Results out of 5,594 responses, 21 respondents skipped question.)**

**81.98% YES**  
4,586 out of 5,594

**11.5% NO**  
648 out of 5,594

**6% UNSURE**  
340 out of 5,594

**How would the continuation of fare-free service affect your use of Sun Tran (and/or other transit)?** *(Survey results out of 5,563 responses, 32 respondents skipped question.)*

- 53.65% I would ride a lot more
- 15.99% I would ride a little more
- 2.06% I would ride less
- 2.44% I would ride a lot less
- 3.55% I would stop riding
- 18.07% would be no change
- 4.22% I do not ride now

**In your opinion, what do you think are the biggest benefits of fare-free service?** *(4,437 comments, below are common responses.)*

- Accessible transportation for all
- Helping the community
- Good for the environment
- One less worry for people struggling during/ post pandemic

**In your opinion, what do you think are the concerns of remaining a fare-free service?** *(3,992 comments, below are common responses.)*

- Safety, concerning drug usage on bus, bus stop shelters, and transit centers
- The increased population of unsheltered people riding
- Concern for drivers' well-being
- Funding of system

### **Operator Survey – Teamsters 104**

The Operator Survey was made available 7/15-7/29, and was distributed to Sun Tran Operators at both sites, as well as to Sun Link Operators and Sun Van Operators. Marketing staff delivered donuts and “Thank you” cards and talked personally with operators about taking the survey. During the bid period over the course of a week, the Service Planning Department also talked to Operators about the survey. Forty-seven Sun Tran Operators have taken the survey to date. An extension of the survey is currently in progress from 9/14-9/30.

**Q: In your opinion, do you think transit in Tucson should remain free?**

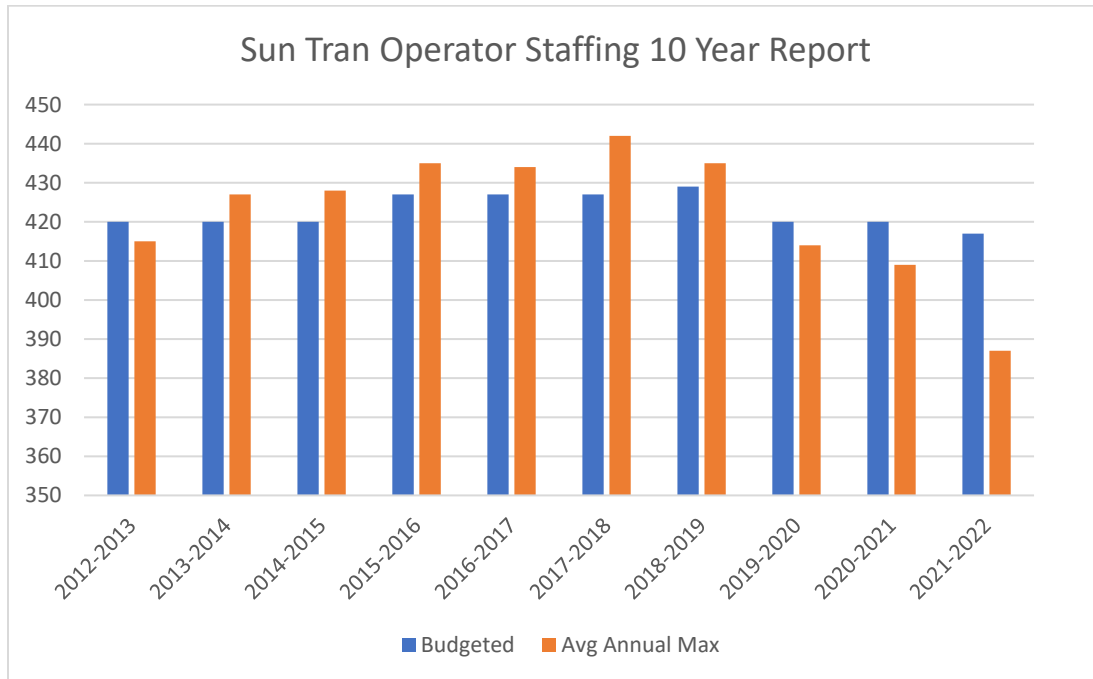
- Sun Tran Operator’s said **17%** wanted fares remain free, while **83%** wanted to go back to collecting fares
- Sun Link Operator’s said **25%** wanted fares remain free, while **75%** wanted to go back to collecting fares
- Sun Van Operator’s said **11%** wanted fares remain free, while **89%** wanted to go back to collecting fares

## Sun Tran Operator Staffing Levels

The chart below shows the number of budgeted operators compared to the average number of maximum operators.

The chart indicates that prior to the pandemic Sun Tran was able to keep up with turnover through hiring. Since 2020 Sun Tran has not been able to maintain staffing to match that required to fully operate the service.

At times in recent years Sun Tran has been able to maintain more than the budgeted employees to accommodate those on long term absence.



## Dwell Time

Sun Tran does not expect a significant change in dwell times with or without fare collection. Currently Sun Tran is in the process of updating fare collection technology, should leadership decide to go back to collecting fares.

## Costs to Reinstate Fares

<b>Fiscal Year 2023</b>	
Farebox Tech Wages and Benefits	\$ 70,000
Special Services Wages and Benefits	\$ 132,500
Genfare Maintenance	\$ 70,000
Loomis Pick Up, Cash Count Machines	\$ 15,000
Tablets for Sales Outlets	\$ 80,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 367,500</b>

# 2022

## Local Public Outreach



Sun Tran, Sun Link and Sun Van



**Public Input & Outreach, to date**

On behalf of the City of Tucson, Sun Tran staff hosted eight (8) public open house events (seven (7) in-person and one (1) virtual), and planned eight (8) pop-up events at Laos and Ronstadt Transit Center, as well as a three (3) different events at the University of Arizona, to obtain public input on the future of fares. The community had the opportunity to provide input on the future of fares, and take a paper survey regarding the future of fares.

A total of fifty-four (54) people attended the meetings hosted in local libraries, ward offices, tribal facilities and virtually. So far, the engagement at the pop-ups has been high, at the Laos Transit Center thirty-seven (37) surveys were completed, Ronstadt Transit Center fifty-nine (59) were, and a total of forty-five (45) were completed at the University of Arizona.

In addition to in-person meetings, events and survey information were promoted by:

- Information posted at all three transit centers
- Strip Cards on every route
- Posters located on all transit vehicles including Sun Tran, Sun Express, Sun Shuttle, Sun Van, Sun On Demand, and Sun Link
- Regional transit website
- Social media post (see below)
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KGUN	3
KHRR	2
Tucson Sentinel	2
Daily Wildcat	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

Sun Tran posted several stories to their social media where it was shared by the community:

Sun Tran Social Media	Number of Post	Reach/ Shares
Facebook	19	20 shares (combined)
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The following community partners shared our information in various ways, through newsletters, email blasts, social media, etc:

- Ward 1, 3, 4 and 6
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7/21/2022	6 – 7 pm	Virtual Meeting	5
<b>Total Attendees</b>			<b>54</b>

<b>Transit Pop-Ups</b>			
8/3/2022	4 pm – 6pm	Laos Transit Center	37
8/5/2022	10 am – 12 pm	Ronstadt Transit Center	59
8/10/2022	4 pm – 6 pm	Ronstadt Transit Center	63
8/12/2022	10 am – 12 pm	Laos Transit Center	10
8/17/2022	4 pm – 6 pm	Laos Transit Center	15
8/19/2022	10 am – 12 pm	Ronstadt Transit Center	61
8/24/2022	5 pm – 6 pm	University of Arizona	24
8/30/2022	11am – 1pm	University of Arizona	7
9/1/2022	9am – 11am	University of Arizona	14
<b>Total Surveys Returned</b>			<b>290</b>

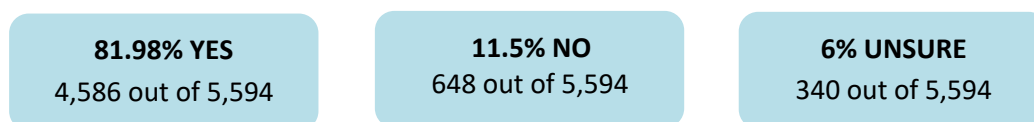
At the Public Input Open Houses, we spoke to a total of fifty-four (54) people, who either attended one of our eight (8) events. Spanish speaking staff attended each open house event to provide verbal, and written translation if necessary. Additionally, eighteen (18) community members took the opportunity to submit a paper survey.

At the Pop-Up events, Spanish staff has also attended to help as necessary, out of the two hundred ninety (290) surveys that were returned, ten (10) were in Spanish.

The Sun Tran Fare Study Survey began July 11, 2022, the city-wide efforts included having open houses in every ward, and at transit centers. Currently five thousand five hundred and ninety four (5,594) public surveys have been completed. The survey was hosted through Survey Monkey, made available online, and paper surveys were provided at all events, and at transit centers. The survey is available in English and Spanish, both online and paper format. The survey has been included in all marketing efforts, links have been posted through social media and QR codes were used on all print material.

Below are key findings from the Sun Tran Fare Study Survey:

Do you think Sun Tran (and other transit) services should keep fare-free for everyone in the future? (Results out of 5,594 responses, 21 respondents skipped question.)



How would the continuation of fare-free service affect your use of Sun Tran (and/or other transit)?

**(Survey results out of 5,563 responses, 32 respondents skipped question)**

- 53.65% I would ride a lot more
- 15.99% I would ride a little more
- 2.06% I would ride less
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- 3.55% I would stop riding
- 18.07% would be no change
- 4.22% I do not ride now

In your opinion, what do you think are the biggest benefits of fare-free service?

**(4,437 comments, below are common responses.)**

- Accessible transportation for all
- Helping the community
- Good for the environment
- One less worry for people struggling during/ post pandemic

In your opinion, what do you think are the concerns of remaining a fare-free service?  
**(3,992 comments, below are common responses.)**

- None
- Safety, concerning drug usage on bus, bus stop shelters, and transit centers
- The increased population of unsheltered people riding
- Concern for drivers well-being
- Funding of system

### **Operator Survey**

The Operator survey, was made available 7/15-7/29, the survey was distributed to Sun Tran Operators at both sites, Sun Link Operators and Sun Van Operators. Marketing staff delivered donuts and thank you cards and talked personally with Operators about taking the survey. During the Bid period over the course of a week, the Service Planning Department also talked to Operators about the survey. Forty seven Sun Tran Operators have taken the survey to date.

An extension of the survey is currently in progress from 9/14-9/30.

### **Below are key findings from the survey**

Q: In your opinion, do you think transit in Tucson should remain free?

- Sun Tran Operator's said 17% wanted fares remain free, while 83% wanted to go back to collecting fares
- Sun Link Operator's said 25% wanted fares remain free, while 75% wanted to go back to collecting fares
- Sun Van Operator's said 11% wanted fares remain free, while 89% wanted to go back to collecting fares

## **Peer Review Summary**

After examining 17 different transit agencies, authorities, and systems, Sun Tran can start to get a better picture of what is happening around the country with fare-free service and public transportation during a time of uncertainty. 12 fare-free peer agencies and 5 fare collecting peer agencies were reviewed and compared to Sun Tran and Sun Van. These agencies were chosen by comparing overall statistics, the similarity of Tucson's ridership, and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main areas of interest and examination for each agency fixed route and paratransit ridership, community impacts and benefits, safety and security, funding sources, fare-free implementation, and any other details gleaned from conversations, news articles, agencies' websites, etc.

A majority of these systems are still having ridership problems or are still below pre-COVID levels, 88% of agencies surveyed are below pre-COVID levels for fixed route and 82% of agencies are below pre-COVID levels for paratransit. The effect fare-free had on an increase in ridership is negligible; however, it is important to note that other external factors may have prevented individuals from using public transportation, such as mask mandates, COVID-19 regulations, and restrictions, reduction in overall service, and limited-service hours. Agencies that had implemented fare-free service before COVID did see an increase in their ridership numbers however it was a gradual increase from year to year. Driver and operator shortage is another issue that cannot be ignored and directly affects the amount of service an agency can provide. 65% of the agencies examined reported a shortage in drivers, either for fixed route, paratransit, or both. Increases in salaries and incentives were incorporated but have done little to attract potential employees.

Sun Tran and Sun Van's ridership numbers are both still below pre-COVID levels, 90-95% of pre-COVID levels for Sun Tran, and 75-80% of pre-COVID levels for Sun Van. The main decrease in ridership can be attributed to the decrease in overall service and having to adjust the schedule to match the number of operators available. Similar to other agencies Sun Tran and Sun Van are facing a shortage making it difficult to provide optimal service and return to 100% levels before COVID-19. Sun Tran and Sun Van have slowly been able to add service back in but until staff vacancies are filled, it will be difficult to restore service fully. Sun Tran has taken many of the same actions mentioned by other agencies when it comes to trying to retain drivers (salary increases, hiring bonuses, attending job fairs, etc.) but still struggled to reduce its turnover rate.

When looking at the support and overall reception towards fare-free service, it is overwhelmingly positive and strong. 75% of the systems surveyed mentioned the public, non-profits, community organizations, and even political leaders championing fare-free service and having good things to say. Riders and administration staff mentioned how easy the systems

have become to use and how much peace of mind it offers to not only low-income, and minority populations but also those who have other transportation options available to them. Fare-free service also has the benefit of covering environmental, social justice, and equity spheres that can all improve the city's reputation and be seen as positive values for the city or transit agency to push towards. Fare-free service also allows riders who are new to public transit an easier way to learn, lessens the intimidation factor, and does not require the rider to waste their money or time. Improved marketing materials and customer outreach allowed transit agencies to be proud of offering a fare-free service and to get more involved with the community around them. Looking at public survey results, the top issues mentioned were improved service windows/hours, increased frequency, better reliability, and improving ease of use. Fare-free service greatly improves the ease of use and leads to the transit agency being able to focus on large system improvements, benefiting the riders and system even more.

The overall reception towards fare-free service has been somewhat mixed but skews closer to supporting a fare-free service in Tucson. Issues about safety, reliability, improved service, and security have been the top concerns coming from the public and operators. These issues are similar to the concerns mentioned by the other agencies and their riders. One issue that was heard specifically from Sun Tran riders was how confusing and frustrating the fare structure was for riders to understand which is solved with a fare-free service or at least a reduced and less complicated fare structure.

Looking at safety and security shows that all agencies increased their security spending and budget. These increases came from hiring guard services or increasing guard amounts, improved security technology, increased security training, and or increased safety and security materials. 47% of agencies saw an increase in non-destination riders which lead to stronger enforcement of rider rules and code of conduct, even banning or excluding passengers who repeatedly violated the rules, implementing new rules for anti-loitering, non-smoking areas, and even ride-to-destination rules meaning a passenger must get off at least one stop before the end of the line. 59% of agencies saw an increase in non-violent incidents; however, fare-free service was not the only contributor to this increase – agencies stated mask mandates, COVID-19 stressors, high inflation, high gas prices, and other external factors led to these increased incidents. These non-violent incidents also include passenger versus passenger disputes, not solely limited to operator or driver involvement. Removing fares did reduce the amount of interaction between passengers and operators and lowered the incidents involving fare evasion.

Since the pandemic, Sun Tran has experienced a vast number of loiterers at bus stops and at transit centers, experienced a significant increase in blatant drug and alcohol abuse at bus stops, at transit centers, and on buses. These issues, drug addiction, mental illness, and poverty

are more of a community-wide problem that transit by itself cannot fix nor is it the main source for these issues. Sun Tran has put many of these safety practices mentioned by other agencies into use already. Sun Tran has increased its security force and presence in downtown hubs and transit centers, increased safety and security training, not limited just to operators but road supervisors and admin staff as well, improved security infrastructure, and increased overall security awareness to riders and users of the transit system.

When examining funding sources, 59% of all agencies had at least one dedicated source of funding, whether it be a local sales tax, property tax, gas tax, etc. This dedicated source of funding makes it easier for fare-free services to continue because the fare box revenue isn't as vital to the agency and the expenses are covered without taking funds from the general fund or needing extra state, local, or federal funding. 24% of the agencies also had an outside partnership or business partnership to cover costs and funds associated with public transit. These partnerships ranged from universities and colleges to local downtown investment groups. Agencies also received funding from state and local grants to help with fare-free pilot programs.

Sun Tran has neither a direct source of funding nor outside partnerships to make up for the revenue lost by stopping fare collections. If Sun Tran was able to establish a dedicated source of funding it could use those funds to cover not only the farebox revenue but also direct funds to specific route or service improvements, as well as upgrade bus stops, bus facilities, and bus amenities.



# Benchmarking Other Systems

<b>Systems surveyed:</b>	GoDurham (Durham, NC)	CTtransit (State Department, CT)
GRTC (Richmond, VA)	GoCary (Cary, NC)	MATA (Memphis, TN)
CTS (Corvallis, OR)	TARA (Toledo, OH)	JTA (Jacksonville, FL)
CHT (Chapel Hill, NC)	ABQ Ride (Albuquerque, NM)	SunMetro (El Paso, TX)
GoTriangle (North Carolina)	Intercity Transit (Olympia, WA)	RTA (New Orleans, LA)
GoRaleigh (Raleigh, NC)	KCATA (Kansas City, MO)	COTPA (Oklahoma City, OK)

## Ridership (Fixed Route & Paratransit):

- ◆ 88% of agencies are still below their pre-COVID levels for ridership for fixed route
- ◆ 82% of agencies are still below their pre-COVID levels for paratransit.
- ◆ 65% of agencies are facing operator shortages for both fixed route and paratransit. They have had to increase driver salaries and incentives to try and retain drivers, however still having trouble finding employees
- ◆ Sun Tran and Sun Van are also facing a driver and operator shortage even after increasing salary and offering incentives. Ridership for fixed route is starting to increase over pre-pandemic levels (2%); however, Sun Van ridership is still below pre-pandemic levels and could take longer to recover. The significant demand for paratransit trips is starting to strain Sun Van's limited capacity. Sun Link's ridership has dramatically increased with free fare during the public health crisis.

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ 75% of the fare free systems received overwhelming positive support from the public, community organizations, non-profit and political leaders.
- ◆ While ridership was not heavily impacted by fare free service it did make it easier for riders to get on and off, as well as encouraging new riders to try the system and see if it works for them.
- ◆ Agencies created fliers and marketed free fares to inform the public and encourage ridership.
- ◆ The overall reception towards fare-free service has been somewhat mixed but skews closer to supporting a fare-free service in Tucson. Issues about safety, reliability, improved service, and security have been the top concerns coming from the public and operators. These issues are comparable to the concerns mentioned by the other agencies and their riders.
- ◆ One issue that was heard specifically from Sun Tran riders was how confusing and frustrating the fare structure was for riders to understand which is solved with a fare-free service or at least a reduced and less complicated fare structure.



## Safety & Security:

- ◆ 77% of agencies surveyed primarily use local law enforcement as their main security force to assist in dealing with transit incidents compared to 18% of agencies use contracted security services only
- ◆ 47% of agencies saw an increase in non-destination riders, however agencies enacted ride to destination rules that prevented users from continuously riding one line, requiring they get off at least one stop before the end of the line
- ◆ 59% of agencies saw an increase in non-violent incidents involving passengers or operators, 24% of agencies saw an increase in violent incidents involving passengers or operators
- ◆ Agencies that were surveyed also created ride to destination rules, as well as implement no-smoking and anti-loitering laws to help reduce the amount of security calls and incidents
- ◆ Agencies had aggressive code of conduct for the riders and were able to ban or exclude individuals from the bus if it was shown they had repeatedly violated the system rules
- ◆ Sun Tran has put many of these safety practices mentioned by other agencies into use already, whether in be increasing security force and presence in downtown hubs and transit centers, increasing safety and security training, not limited just to operators but road supervisors and admin staff as well, improving security infrastructure, and increasing overall security awareness to riders and users of the transit system.

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ 59% of all agencies surveyed had at least one source of dedicated funding (local sales tax, property tax, gas tax, etc.)
- ◆ 24% of the agencies surveyed had at least one private or outside business partnership
- ◆ Agencies were able to receive grants and funding from local or state governments
- ◆ The biggest concerns from agencies were about where to find funding and how much would be needed in order to cover farebox revenue
- ◆ Sun Tran has neither a direct source of funding nor outside partnerships to make up for the revenue lost by stopping fare collections.



Richmond, Virginia

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	20.9%
Service Area Population	492,914
Service Area	216 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	6.4 million
Operating Expense	\$56.3 million
Farebox Recovery	12.07%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Paused fare collection in 2020, has extended free fare service until 2025 with the help of federal funding and state grants
- ◆ As of November 2021, GRTC's local ridership exceeds pre-pandemic ridership (up nearly 10% compared to ridership data in November 2019)
- ◆ Did not reduce service at all during the COVID-19 pandemic, only had to reduce in September 2021 due to operator shortage
- ◆ Costs have increased, mostly due to salary increases and operating improved service windows

## Safety and Security:

- ◆ Drivers have felt safer since front and rear door boarding are both available
- ◆ Reduced the amount of disruption from customers about not having the correct fare or pass
- ◆ Masks were the main dispute between drivers and passengers when required on the bus
- ◆ Rely on local law enforcement to respond to incidents, also work closely with VDOT to increase overall safety training and tools available

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Main funding is coming from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Transit Ridership incentive
- ◆ Virginia Commonwealth University is partnered with GRTC to provide funding
- ◆ Looking to expand with more businesses and corporations through private partnerships or funding agreements
- ◆ Made a deal with Uber to cover early morning and late night trips that had to be cut because of driver shortage
- ◆ Biggest challenge is how to regain the funding fares covered, covered completely by GRTC or with the help of some municipalities that are being served?

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Went through a network redesign right before the COVID-19 Pandemic
- ◆ Only reduced service this past September because of driver shortage along express routes and lowered frequency of popular routes and BRT lines
- ◆ Operating costs have increased because of improving service windows/hours and increasing wages for operators to incentivize them to stay
- ◆ Ridership has increased but difficult to say how much of a role free fares played versus other factors like rising gas prices, and COVID-19 regulations being lifted

## Paratransit:

- ◆ CARE (Community Assisted Ride Enterprise), CARE Plus and CARE-On-Demand
- ◆ Ridership among paratransit has increased across all three modes since becoming fare free
- ◆ The amount of optional trips have reduced whereas essential trips have increased
- ◆ Safety among passengers is the biggest concern from GRTC and riders themselves, limited the amount of passengers per vehicle

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Overall very supported by the community, even the mayor has said positive statements and shown support about being fare free
- ◆ GRCT would like to remain fare free after the 5 year program is complete
- ◆ Incidental trips have increased since the bus is free and residents don't have to worry about having enough money for the bus, can try transit out and makes it easy to hop on and off
- ◆ People are looking at GRTC with a more positive light, especially since they didn't reduce service during the height of the Pandemic and have maintained their levels of service



## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	25%
Service Area Population	61,027
Service Area	14sq. miles
Passenger Trips	948,184
Operating Expense	\$3.7 million
Farebox Recovery	0%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Been fare free since 2011
- ◆ Ridership increased 38% the first year after being fare free and 59% in three years
- ◆ Had overwhelming support to create a fare free service and remains that way
- ◆ Have been able to create new sources of funding through the TOF and STIF
- ◆ The main drivers behind costs increasing were adding improved service windows for their popular routes
- ◆ Overall the service provided has become better, more efficient and can serve a greater population

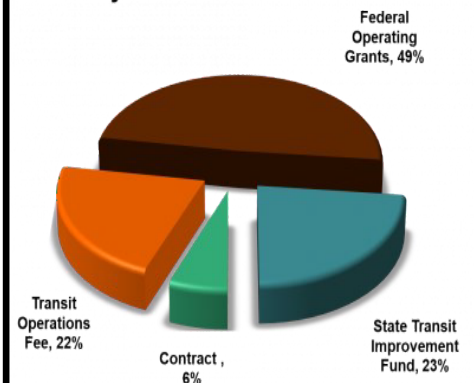
## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Rely entirely on local law enforcement for security, also employee road supervisors who can help manage incidents
- ◆ Police department is located closely to the downtown transit center (within a mile)
- ◆ Operate cameras at transit center and on all buses which have reduced negative events
- ◆ Instituted a no smoking law and anti-loitering laws to move people away from the transit center and surrounding sidewalks and downtown areas
- ◆ Created a Ride to Destination rule—doesn't allow for one full loop trip, have to get off at least one stop before the transit center
- ◆ Did not see an increase in behavior issues when going fare free or with the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ State grants, Federal grants, Oregon State University, donations, advertising, and the Transit Operations fee (TOF)
- ◆ The TOF is a monthly fee collected from all Corvallis utility customers and the fee is tied to gas prices
- ◆ The TOF eliminated competition with other essential services for property tax funding and provided a stable source of local funding
- ◆ Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) is a dedicated source of funding for transit and transportation

2019-20 Corvallis Transit System Revenue



## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Ridership increased since becoming fare free, the first year they saw a 38% increase in ridership numbers
- ◆ CTS relies heavily on student riders, they make up around 40-42% of all riders
- ◆ Had to reduce service during the COVID-19 Pandemic but are slowly regaining riders
- ◆ Still having issues with hiring, and maintaining operators
- ◆ The main operating cost that increased was amount of service hours/windows along popular routes
- ◆ Costs have actually gone down since there is no need to buy tickets, or passes, maintain farebox software and less personnel required

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Saw an increase in ridership however not as large of an increase compared to fixed route
- ◆ Certain qualifications have to be met in order to obtain a free paratransit ride (if a rider qualifies for the City of Corvallis ADA paratransit service, they automatically qualify for the Benton County STF program, however, only CTS Paratransit services are free, Benton County still requires a fare)

## Community Impact & Benefits:

- ◆ Fare free has been wonderful for the community and overwhelmingly supported
- ◆ Allows Corvallis to attract prospective students, businesses, and corporations
- ◆ CTS was able to qualify for increased 5307 funding by meeting performance levels set by the FTA
- ◆ Social justice was an unexpected benefit, not the main reason behind going fare free initially but reflects the environment Corvallis wants
- ◆ Saves time between the routes, buses don't have as much dwell time, don't have to spend time trying to get the correct fare from passengers
- ◆ Partnered with Oregon State University to create a late night service that catered to college students but is available for everyone
- ◆ Partnered with a local school district to provide service—only one route, serves middle school and high school



Chapel Hill, North Carolina

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	18.5
Service Area Population	80,000
Service Area	62 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	57,602
Operating Expense	\$3.1 million
Farebox Recovery	0%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Been fare free for 20+ years, started providing fare free service in 2002
- ◆ Ridership has increased significantly since implementing fare free service
- ◆ Had capacity concerns because of the growth of ridership, fleet size was increased to cover this growth
- ◆ Farebox revenue was ~12% and passes were already being subsidized by the University
- ◆ Improved service and reliability by 20% because a pre-paid system that is unreliable and ineffective does nothing to encourage or increase rider usage

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Rely only on local law enforcement and the University's security force if there is an issue
- ◆ Implementing a Crisis counselor to help riders who may be having issues instead of calling law enforcement
- ◆ Have seen an increase in incidents involving passengers and operators but not due to free fares but rather COVID-19 stressors (saw 4-5 cases a year, now up to 4-5 cases a month)
- ◆ Have started to post signage and placards that inform riders about the code of conduct and security concerns

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro both increased property taxes
- ◆ University of North Carolina (UNC) has doubled their contributions through student and employee fees-more than both the Town of Chapel Hill and Carrboro combined
- ◆ No other business partnership or agreements with private entities
- ◆ Have been able to triple the amount of state money received because of their improved service and number of trips supplied

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Since becoming a pre-paid service, ridership has increased 130% YTD
- ◆ Have continued to add improved service windows and added frequency along the most popular/highest ridership routes and corridors
- ◆ Operating costs have increased because of the added service, more vehicles, and increase in drivers
- ◆ During the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, they reduced service to weekend service levels, have slowly added service back and are at 80% of pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Have not been able to return to 100% service because of operator shortage
- ◆ Developed parking strategies that supported transit, including limited parking downtown and on UNC's campus

## Paratransit:

- ◆ EZ RIDER is a demand response, shared ride service and eligibility is determined on a case by case basis
- ◆ Ridership increased 20% in year one and steadily increased but is now on the decline due to multiple issues: operator shortage, inability to purchase vehicles, reduced capacity and trips because of COVID-19 concerns
- ◆ Had capacity concerns with both paratransit and fixed route initially when going to a pre-paid service but were able to remedy those concerns with increased vehicle fleet purchases and size

## Community Impact & Benefits:

- ◆ Very positive reception from the general public, stakeholders, political leaders, and funding partners
- ◆ Promotes the idea that a citizen has more freedom and choice, can use transit without a barrier to entry
- ◆ Transit is an investment and should be treated that way
- ◆ Furthers Chapel Hill's commitment to a clean environment, sustainability, and a multi-modal transportation system
- ◆ Improved the community image and showed where CHT's values were
- ◆ Helped mitigate roadway construction and limited the amount of parking garages being built



## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	4.7%
Service Area Population	1.6 million
Service Area	1,665sq. miles
Passenger Trips	1.2 million
Operating Expense	\$18.335 million
Farebox Recovery	6.92%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Suspended fares at the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic (March 2020)
- ◆ Fares are suspended until June 2023
- ◆ Working in conjunction with partner systems to create and adopt the best possible fare policy for riders and the systems themselves
- ◆ Believe that the fare free system has benefited the general public and made transit more equitable and accessible

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Rely on local law enforcement between the surrounding areas served but do have road supervisors that can assist drivers when help is needed
- ◆ Have seen an increase in assaults and incidents involving passengers and operators, unsure if the cause is because of free fare service or COVID-19 impacts
- ◆ Working with other transit system to create and enforce an aggressive code of conduct for riders

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Main source of revenue comes from a half cent sales and general use tax (Wake County Transit Plan)
- ◆ 5% rental vehicle tax
- ◆ Three vehicle registration taxes and fees
- ◆ Receive funding from other local municipalities and agencies within the region



## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Reduced service during the height of the pandemic to Saturday-level service
- ◆ Limited ridership and operator shortage has caused delays to return to pre-COVID operation levels
- ◆ Saw an increase in ridership but still below pre-COVID levels, not sure if the increase in ridership is due to the free fare service, rising gas prices, or COVID-19 restrictions being lifted
- ◆ Helped create and develop three (3) multiple transportation plans for the all regions served (Wake County Transit Plan, Orange County Transit Plan, and Durham County Transit Plan)
- ◆ Planning on increasing service regionally to improve reliability, accessibility, mobility, and overall to create better connected systems under the GoTransit branding

## Paratransit:

- ◆ GoTriangle ACCESS—regional paratransit service that provides curb-to-curb service with optional door-to-door service (upon request)
- ◆ Eligibility is determined through a formal application and interview process
- ◆ Overall ridership and trips decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, slowly ticking back up but will take time to return to pre-pandemic levels

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Suspending fares adds to quality of life by encouraging more residents to try transit as a means of avoiding congestion and helping to address climate change
- ◆ Free fare service seeks to ease the financial burden faced by residents who rely on transit the most
- ◆ Community supports being fare free, main compliments are being the ease of use and choice it gives the general public
- ◆ Costs benefit from removing the process of collecting fares and eliminating positions that are no longer needed

# GoRaleigh



## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	11.8%
Service Area Population	469,298
Service Area	125 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	4.779 million
Operating Expense	\$30.488 million
Farebox Recovery	8.03%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Suspended fares at the start of the pandemic
- ◆ Similar to other GoTransit system, free fares were being discussed and are now at the top of the list
- ◆ Ridership levels are at 80% of pre-COVID numbers
- ◆ Biggest concern is balancing the budget without fares

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Saw a slight uptick in incidents involving passengers and operators since becoming fare free
- ◆ Problems continue onto the buses but transit is not the origin place for these issues, large community problem
- ◆ Discussing the idea of gated enforcement, a pass or ticket is needed to board to show that you are at least a rider and within the system (can be as simple as name, phone number, address)
- ◆ Work directly with the Raleigh police department to assist at transit centers and respond to incidents farther away
- ◆ Discussions about contracted service are happening but nothing concrete has been decided
- ◆ Introduced the idea of having a guard on the bus to manage passengers and concerns while the operator can focus on driving

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Half cent (.5) sales tax as part of the Wake Transit Plan, accounts for 30% of funding
- ◆ 50% from City of Raleigh general fund
- ◆ 10% contracting services with smaller municipalities
- ◆ 10% state funds
- ◆ Don't have any outside corporate or business partnerships

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Reduced service to weekend levels for 30 days before returning to a normal operating schedule
- ◆ Have seen a change in transportation and travel patterns, suburban and express is slow to climb back however, downtown and core/trunk routes have surpassed pre-pandemic levels
- ◆ Significant pay bump to fixed route operators as an incentive to remain at work
- ◆ Have been getting mixed reviews from the operators when it comes to remaining fare free
- ◆ Data about ridership, trips, etc., might be more difficult to gather with no fares and limited APC data

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Saw an increase of about 10-15% over 2019 Pre-Pandemic levels
- ◆ Average about 1,400 trips a day with independent taxies and normal service fleet
- ◆ Significant increases in salary and wages to incentivize drivers and operators to stay
- ◆ Have some capacity concerns because of the shortage of drivers and ability to purchase and maintain vehicles

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Daily riders have supported keeping fares free
- ◆ Individuals without as many transit options have supported remaining fare free
- ◆ Easy of use and convenience, ability to just get on and off without worrying about fares or having the correct pass/ticket
- ◆ Social equity and social justice are mains ideas for keeping it free, backing from community organizations
- ◆ Fares will be discussed this Fall between all GoTransit system to find a potential outcome



## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	14.2%
Service Area Population	267,743
Service Area	93 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	5.6 million
Operating Expense	\$5.134 million
Farebox Recovery	2.6%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Started fare free service at the beginning of the pandemic
- ◆ Looking into fare capping and mobile ticketing but fare free service has replaced that idea
- ◆ Ridership did decrease but has recovered quickly in comparison to neighboring systems
- ◆ Looking at remaining fare free for the foreseeable future but working with the other Go Transit systems to adapt the same fare policy
- ◆ Currently fare free until June 30th, 2022

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Rely on the Durham Police department to handle issues, pay off-duty officers to patrol the downtown transit hub but very rarely do they ride the buses
- ◆ Have had an increase in security calls from riders regarding non-destination passengers and those with substance abuse problems or mental illness
- ◆ Fare free has lead to less confrontations between passengers and drivers when dealing with fare evasion

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Durham County Transit Plan
- ◆ Receive money from county vehicle registration and rental car fees
- ◆ Half cent sales and use tax as well as a property tax as well
- ◆ Used to have a partnership with Duke University but no longer receive any sort of private funding

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Reduced some service during the height of the pandemic but are back to running around 80% pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Did not see a massive loss in ridership, only around 25-30%
- ◆ Biggest detriment to returning to full service is operator shortage
- ◆ Had planned for system expansion in 2022 but has been pushed back until operator numbers return to normal
- ◆ Fare free service has reduced operating costs, no need for new fare boxes required, no farebox maintenance required, less staff and salaries

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Merged service between GoDurham and Durham county—GoDurham ACCESS, which provides curb-to-curb or door-to-door service (upon request)
- ◆ Partnered with UZURV, an adaptive transportation network company, as a supplemental service to provide direct trips to paratransit riders in addition to GoDurham ACCESS
- ◆ Ridership was down around 50% during the pandemic, is slowly ticking back up
- ◆ Running significantly fewer vans and vehicles because of driver shortages

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Support for fare free service has been overwhelmingly positive, received support from the general public, community organization, political leaders, and GoDurham staff
- ◆ Free fare service helps support low income communities and riders (72% of Durham riders make less than \$25,000)
- ◆ Fare free service has increased the usability and convenience of the transit system
- ◆ Fare free service has increased the amount of equitable engagement between community organization, local government, and the general public



Cary, North Carolina

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	4.7%
Service Area Population	171,143
Service Area	59sq. miles
Passenger Trips	35,591
Operating Expense	\$2.997 million
Farebox Recovery	4.37%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Fare free was something that had been discussed before but COVID-19 Pandemic pushed it to the forefront
- ◆ Did not have high fare revenue to begin with—fare collections process made that revenue amount even smaller
- ◆ Did have an increase in safety and security concerns but hired more guards to curtail those issues
- ◆ Have seen increased ridership and the highest total ridership ever—the only system within GoTransit to do so

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Have had to hire more private contracted security for main depot transit stations
- ◆ Contracts with York Security to provide their needs—increased about 50%
- ◆ Increase in calls about safety and security concerns from both drivers and passengers
- ◆ Increases in issues where it is passenger vs passenger, not passenger vs operator
- ◆ Property damage and maintenance requests have increased, increased the numbers of times custodial staff has to come out and clean transit centers, bathrooms, buses, etc.

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Half cent (.5) sales tax provides the majority of funding
- ◆ Vehicle license tax—3%
- ◆ Funds are matched at the local and state level
- ◆ Alignment among fares and other large capital projects with the surrounding transit systems (Go Transit systems)

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Ridership has increased from becoming fare free, however could also be due to the rise of gas prices and COVID-19 regulations starting to relax
- ◆ Reduced service from April 2020 to June 2020 (From thirty minute service to hourly service)
- ◆ Constant service improvements and changes during January 2021 and onwards
- ◆ Have added that reduced service back and are now running at their normal pre-pandemic service level
- ◆ Not having issues with operator shortages
- ◆ Have had their highest ridership year ever

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Offer 3 Tiers of Paratransit service
- ◆ Saw a significant increase in applications once the service became free
- ◆ Limited the amount of service provided for about a year during the height of the pandemic
- ◆ Ridership has declined since the start but bounced back a little—had to manage concerns about overcrowding and service hours

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Have not gotten a lot of pushback or response about being fare free
- ◆ More people are willing to try transit and see if it works for them since becoming fare free
- ◆ The intimidation factor for riding transit is gone (not knowing how to pay a fare, taking too much time to find money, etc.)
- ◆ Cost benefit from having to reduce admin staff as well as removing fare boxes and associated maintenance
- ◆ System efficiency has rising due to not collecting fares



Toledo, Ohio

## Agency Statistics (2020)

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	18%
Service Area Population	374,213
Service Area	142 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	1 million
Operating Expense	\$27.6 million
Farebox Recovery	5.08%

### Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Suspended fares at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic
- ◆ Released a new fare structure as a pilot program (6 months) before proposing a permanent fare structure
- ◆ Pilot program scheduled to kick off Monday, Aug. 1
- ◆ New fare boxes and validators will be capable of accepting digital payments through the EZfare app
- ◆ Identified unmet needs through community outreach and created goals and plans to achieve these ideas

### Safety & Security:

- ◆ Have seen an increase in unruly passenger behavior and incidents, worried that incidents might increase when fares come back
- ◆ Rely on the Toledo Police department to respond to certain incidents that drivers, dispatch, and road supervisors may not be able to handle
- ◆ Have enforced bans on certain riders that have constantly created issues or are disruptive
- ◆ Hub of Hope program was created to provide a space for local organizations to reach out to the general public and provide services that may be of help to others

### Funding Sources:

- ◆ Enacted a countywide sales tax (.5%) to replace the property tax previously used to subsidize TARTA-expected to generate \$32 million which is more than double what it collected from property taxes
- ◆ \$14 million grant was awarded to replace the lost revenue caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic



## Fixed Route:

- ◆ TARTA Next, a redesign project / COA that plans to revitalize TARTA and create a better system overall
- ◆ TARTA's bus ridership was down by about 90%. Bus ridership has started to show signs of increasing and in March 2021, ridership was at about 33% of pre-COVID levels.
- ◆ While service and hours of operation were scaled back, TARTA also introduced new service windows to support new jobs and partnerships

## Paratransit:

- ◆ TARPS (Toledo Area Regional Paratransit Service)
- ◆ All registered TARPS customers may use TARTA's regular bus line free of fare, can also use the convenient Call-A-Ride service
- ◆ Heavy focus on improving service for disabled and elderly riders
- ◆ Safety and public health concerns are still a major factor for riders and TARTA as a whole
- ◆ Ridership has eclipsed pre-COVID-19 levels due to process and system improvements

## Community Impact & Benefits:

- ◆ TARTA and the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments worked together to create the Locally Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan (LOCHSTP)
- ◆ Working on a bus stop optimization project to increase the speed of the system further
- ◆ Free fares have increased rider mobility and were a safety measure once COVID began
- ◆ Plans on expanding the system and re-engaging with individuals after the pandemic
- ◆ New fare structure has the goals of simplification, affordability, modernization, and alignment



## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	16%
Service Area Population	661,629
Service Area	235 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	6.824 million
Operating Expense	\$39.3 million
Farebox Recovery	6.26%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Fare Free Pilot until 2023
- ◆ Ridership is still down from 2019 levels but have slowly climbed up
- ◆ A different approach to operating and understanding transit is required because of different riders now using the service
- ◆ Worked internally with other departments and services to create the best response possible
- ◆ Still having issues with coach operators shortages but have increased salary and attended multiple hiring events to try and draw new employees

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Did see an increase in unruly behavior and issues between drivers and riders , saw an increase in security calls as well, both from passengers and riders
- ◆ Had to increase security—wanted to hire 22 new guards but was only able to receive 7 due to workforce shortage
- ◆ Has contracted security (Advance On-Site Protection) and also Metro Security Division, another department within the City (10 guards)
- ◆ Started to employ social workers on the bus to help riders—Heading Home Program
- ◆ Opened a cooling center to help reduce the amount of non-destination riders, assist them in getting help

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ \$3 million to fund the zero fares pilot program
- ◆ Receives funding from federal, state, and local funds but primarily from the city's transportation infrastructure tax as well as applying for grant programs
- ◆ Created a partnership with a private developer to reconstruct the Uptown Transit Center, with a focus on mixed-use, transit-oriented development

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Difficult to say if ridership increases are coming from free fare pilot system, rising gas prices, or COVID-19 regulations lifting
- ◆ Ridership is still down below pre-COVID-19 levels, had to reduce service because of health concerns and also driver shortage
- ◆ Administration staff and coach operators are not in favor of a free fare system, however Mayor and Council want to wait and see what the data says before making a decision
- ◆ Data is currently being collected the entire time while being fare free to determine if the program will continue beyond December 31, 2022

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Riders must go through an application and interview process and are then given conditional or unconditional access to the paratransit service
- ◆ Ridership and the number of applications have increased since 2021 but are not at the levels prior to COVID-19
- ◆ The number and distance of trips being taken is smaller compared to pre-COVID levels, attributed to the elderly riders and health concerns.

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Community organizations are in favor for a free fare system—reduced their costs and can reach a larger portion of the population
- ◆ Fare free is seen as more equitable, inclusive, and a social justice issue
- ◆ Transportation has become more accessible, reduces traffic, assists the city's economic development as well as community growth and development
- ◆ Free fares have helped develop more partnerships between the City of Albuquerque and Nonprofits and community organizations (food banks, veterans affairs, etc.)

Olympia, Washington

## Agency Statistics(2020):

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	14.7%
Service Area Population	192,400
Service Area	101 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	1.8 million
Operating Expense	\$1.07 million
Farebox Recovery	0%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Went fare free in 2020—5 year program
- ◆ Ridership increased by 40% from January to March after becoming prepaid
- ◆ Expanding service even without fares
- ◆ Feedback from the public indicated that fare collection, equity environment and improving ridership were the main issues
- ◆ Reviewed alternative payment methods and fare structure but too expensive to justify
- ◆ Did have to increase security and road supervisors to combat public safety concerns

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Have had to add another supervisor during both peak times and weekends
- ◆ Have an aggressive code of conduct for riders that if not obeyed means exclusion or banning from buses, enforces a ride to destination rule
- ◆ Has contracted private security (PalAmerican) which was increased significantly
- ◆ 24/7 coverage during hours of operation and “skeleton” coverage during off hours (2-3 guards)
- ◆ Trying to focus more on providing human services instead of policing riders
- ◆ Strong partnership with local law agencies and crisis management—dedicated spot downtown
- ◆ Operators were worried that it would become a free for all when riding—worked with union leadership to combat this idea

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Used to have partnership with the state when fare collection was happening however don't need those partnership anymore
- ◆ Local sales tax is the main driver behind receiving enough funds - increased about a 1%
- ◆ 5-8% comes from state grants
- ◆ Typical capital funds and formula funds (5307 and 5310) come from the Puget Sound area

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ No pushback from any residents, organizations, or political leaders
- ◆ Political support came from Board of Trustees and Business and Economic Chamber
- ◆ Lowers operating costs because of the elimination of fare equipment, fare collection, ticket management, and administration
- ◆ Coming to a prepaid service was the product of a two year public engagement process that identified fare frustration as the number one issue felt by riders
- ◆ Service was still growing during the height of the pandemic, had to suspend all service for 6 weeks
- ◆ Ridership continues to grow however operator shortage is preventing them from returning to full service

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Ridership dropped significantly and is never expected to fully recover
- ◆ Health concerns are the main reason behind the drop off both between seniors and disabled riders
- ◆ Trips that were seen as optional from passengers are not being completed, essential trip numbers remain the same
- ◆ Paratransit service is fully comparable to fixed route service

## Community Impact & Benefits:

- ◆ The system is becoming more equitable and making communities more livable
- ◆ Ridership is increasing among all levels of income, not just those who are transit dependent
- ◆ Boarding has become easier, faster, and reduced travel times
- ◆ Saw fare collection as an obstacle to creating a better service
- ◆ Overlaps with other community goals like reducing congestion, protecting the environment and social justice issues
- ◆ Helps attract new riders, especially those who want to be less car dependent
- ◆ Created new marketing materials and worked with customer service to educate existing and new customers about fare free service
- ◆ Partnerships with local community organizations such as food banks and veterans affairs to donate older vehicles



Kansas City, Missouri

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	15.3%
Service Area Population	788,748
Service Area	456 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	8.6 million
Operating Expense	\$93 million
Farebox Recovery	.39%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Offered fare free service to certain individuals and groups but went fully fare free at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic
- ◆ Farebox revenue was only 8% of KCATA's total agency revenue
- ◆ Ridership has increased since the zero fare initiative
- ◆ Main concerns involve operator shortage, funding sources, and providing transit at a higher frequency

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Have increased security and number of road supervisors throughout the service area, especially at transit centers and downtown hubs
- ◆ Use a mix of both contracted security services and have an agreement with the Kansas City Police Department to provide 2 full time police officers to reduce response times to incidents
- ◆ Have seen an increase in passengers riding without a destination but limited incidents between drivers and passengers
- ◆ Participate in the "Safe Place" program and working with local social services to provide assistance to passengers who are repeatedly disruptive due to substance abuse or mental illness
- ◆ Enforces a trespass ban on passengers who repeatedly violate rules on the bus or commit offenses

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Received half the required amount to fund the zero fare transit program (\$4.8 million) from the City's budget, the remaining half was made up from RideKC and private partners
- ◆ Receives majority funding from a .5 cent sales tax (KCMO Public Mass Transit Sales Tax)
- ◆ Community partners and municipalities also contribute
- ◆ Federal formula grants and discretionary grants pursued by both KCATA and Community Partners cover the last portion of funding

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Offered fare free service to certain individuals in 2019 but the COVID-19 Pandemic allowed them to create a fare free environment for everyone
- ◆ Had a lot of resistance when first creating and introducing the idea for fare free service but has gained support since implementation
- ◆ Ridership during the Pandemic reduced service to around 60% but was quickly able to rebound and reach about 80%-85% of pre-pandemic levels
- ◆ Service hours and service level has remained the same and will continue to do so, no cuts or closures are foreseen
- ◆ RideKC Next project is a complete redesign for the current bus transit service, currently in phase 2 out of 3

## Paratransit:

- ◆ RideKC Freedom and Ride KC Freedom-On Demand, two services that cater towards disabled and elderly individuals
- ◆ RideKC Freedom has experienced an increase in paratransit users and trips, safety is still a main concern
- ◆ Shortage of drivers, both hired directly from RideKC or from contractors, is causing longer wait times and limited daily ridership

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Has made the bus system more accessible, leading to increased mobility among riders and economic development
- ◆ Overall community support has been increasing, started off slow but picked up during the height of the pandemic and continues to grow
- ◆ Free fares have made incidental trips more common and encouraged people to try the system
- ◆ Working on a bus stop optimization project to improve the system even further
- ◆ Greater focus on what the impact of transit and transportation has on the city and surrounding communities instead of solely focusing on ridership and operations to define transit
- ◆ Top priority from among the community is maintaining reliability and frequency



Connecticut

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	15.3%
Service Area Population	851,535
Service Area	664 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	12.4 million
Operating Expense	\$95.5 million
Farebox Recovery	10.51%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Suspended fares since April 2022, will continue to remain fare free until December 1st, 2022
- ◆ Fare free program may continue depending on overall reaction and information gleaned from ridership data
- ◆ Only 11% of CTtransit's expenses are paid for directly by the riders, 62% is covered by the state and the Federal government covers the other 27%

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Do not have a dedicated security force, however, the local districts and municipalities rely on local law enforcement and do have road supervisors to help when incidents, accidents, or issues arise
- ◆ Have seen an increase in security concerns among passengers and drivers but limited incidents since becoming fare free
- ◆ Have installed cameras among all buses and have increased security awareness and training to operators and road supervisors as well as improved de-escalation tactics and training

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ \$21.2 million is coming from the federal government to cover the gap for the free fare program
- ◆ The Connecticut Department of Transportation is fully responsible for all operating costs, deficits, and capital costs
- ◆ \$1.3 billion dedicated to public transportation from the Federal Infrastructure Bill
- ◆ Special Transportation Fund (STF) is a state appropriated fund that finances most of the state capital and operating dollars that CDOT receives each year. The main sources of STF revenues come from gas tax diesel tax, general sales tax, motor vehicle sales tax, etc.



## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) owns and operates all local systems in Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, Waterbury, New Britain, Bristol, Meriden, and Wallingford
- ◆ Suspended fares to combat a multitude of problems (rising gas prices, inflation, and COVID-19 pandemic)
- ◆ Maintained a high level of service throughout the height of the Pandemic and onwards
- ◆ The fare free program has drawn more riders, total ridership since the Pandemic had only fallen 50% and is now back to 90% pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Believe it could take years for ridership to return and surpass to pre-pandemic levels depending on employers allowing employees to work from home

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Rider eligibility must first be determined from an online application from the Connecticut ADA Paratransit Resource Center
- ◆ CDOT contracts directly for federally mandated complementary ADA paratransit service in the CTtransit service areas
- ◆ Ridership is down below pre-pandemic levels, certain municipalities are limited in the amount of trips they are able to provide due to operator shortages and limited vehicle capacity and limited passenger capacity

## Community Impact & Benefits:

- ◆ Customers are enjoying fares being suspended even if just for a short period
- ◆ Additional weekend service being instituted contributed to increases in ridership
- ◆ Focus on transit-oriented development as riders travel plans continue to change
- ◆ Advocacy groups are starting to popup and be created for bus riders
- ◆ Transit is an essential service and should be treated that way, has been critical for transit dependent individuals who rely on the bus as their only transportation option



Memphis, Tennessee

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	24.6%
Service Area Population	708,275
Service Area	281 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	4.6 million
Operating Expense	\$47.4 million
Farebox Recovery	8.34%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Temporarily suspended fares during the COVID-19 Pandemic but then returned to a fare capping method
- ◆ Ridership has been steadily decreasing since the number of service hours and routes have been cut (either before the COVID-19 Pandemic or after)
- ◆ Main concern is how to increase service and ridership with limited budget and funding amounts

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Rely on a mix between local law enforcement officials, road supervisors, and on-site security guards to handle and monitor any activity that may occur throughout the city
- ◆ Saw an uptick in assaults and incidents between operators and passengers during the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic
- ◆ Have invested in security technology like live streaming cameras across all transit centers and downtown hubs, as well as on buses and trolleys
- ◆ Enforce a strong rider code of conduct and instituted a no smoking policy for the MATA transit centers

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Receive money from the Tennessee Department of Transportation and from the City of Memphis
- ◆ Supported by the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis
- ◆ Funding has declined for the system over the past five (5) years and is suffering from not having a dedicated source of funding
- ◆ Is projected to get \$46 million from the FTA to help with the implementation of the Memphis Innovation Corridor Bus Rapid Transit project.

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Have seen decreased ridership for the past ten (10) years and the COVID pandemic level has impacted ridership even more
- ◆ Ridership has not returned to pre-Pandemic levels and the system is facing a driver shortage problem as well
- ◆ Have had to make several service cuts and route adjustments before the Pandemic and even after, slowly bringing service back
- ◆ The Memphis 3.0 Transit Plan would create new routes with more frequent service, improved weekend and evening service

## Paratransit:

- ◆ MATAplus is a curb-to-curb public transportation option for anyone with disabilities
- ◆ Ridership among paratransit has decreased since the start of the pandemic, operator shortage is also affecting the amount of rides MATA can provide to customers
- ◆ A four (4) step process and review needs to be completed to become eligible for the MATAplus service
- ◆ Created a micro-transit program, Ready!, that does not require reservation or a certification of eligibility but is still accessible for those with a disability

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ The Memphis 3.0 Transit plan would create 17,000 more jobs while also making employment opportunities for minority and low-income more accessible and possible
- ◆ Partnered with community partners and organizations such as Mid-South food bank, Youth Village, and Project Safe Place
- ◆ MATA partnered with the Downtown Memphis Commission, the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, and Via Transportation to create a demand response service titled Groove On-Demand



**JACKSONVILLE  
TRANSPORTATION  
AUTHORITY**

Jacksonville, Florida

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	15%
Service Area Population	1.2 million
Service Area	75sq. miles
Passenger Trips	6.9 million
Operating Expense	\$89.9 million
Farebox Recovery	8.91%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Reduced fare structure for certain groups and individuals, never fully suspended fares
- ◆ Ridership is below pre-COVID levels but on the trend upwards
- ◆ Concerned with expanding service on all levels and creating higher frequency routes to encourage ridership
- ◆ Created an ambitious transportation plan to identify the agencies goals and areas that need improvement

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Have a code of conduct that if violated can result in individual riders and passengers being removed from the bus and banned
- ◆ Work with local law enforcement and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to respond to violent incidents, also used to locate and apprehend individuals who physically assault JTA employees
- ◆ Were proactive in putting up protective barriers for drivers before the COVID-19 Pandemic, had numerous assaults and incidents with passengers before the pandemic
- ◆ Security and safety calls remained the same during the height of the Pandemic

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Dedicated funding comes through a local gas tax- per gallon of gas pumped within Jacksonville six (6) cents is collected, five (5) cents is appropriated to JTA and the other one (1) is retained by the City of Jacksonville
- ◆ Currently partnered with the City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, Jacksonville Electric Authority, the Downtown Investment Authority to develop and find fund opportunities for projects when available

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Ridership is 75-85% pre-COVID levels and coming back slowly, did not reduce service during the height of the pandemic
- ◆ Operate a reduced fare program that covers veterans or customers with disabilities, recipients of Medicare and social security disability or social security income
- ◆ Developed the Mobility Optimization Through Vision and Excellence (MOVE2027) Strategic Plan to respond to the current and future needs of Northeast Florida
- ◆ Re-aligning service to post-pandemic travel demands, extending bus service to underserved regional centers, and streamlining the service change process
- ◆ Ideas of fare-capping and fare-free service is being discussed

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Connexion and Connexion Plus are the two models of paratransit offered by JTA, both services are for applicants with disabilities
- ◆ Ridership is 60-70% pre-COVID levels and struggling to catch up to pre-COVID levels, limited trips and operator shortage
- ◆ Currently developing and implementing a plan for improving bus stops across the region, making bus stops ADA accessible, safety improvements, new shelters, and expanded bus stop amenities

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Have been playing an integral part in helping create more transit oriented development which make it possible to have a higher quality of life and increase mobility throughout the JTA service area
- ◆ JTA has a commitment to connecting people seamlessly throughout the Northeast Florida region and to improve the quality of life, robust and active public engagement
- ◆ Partnered with the City of Jacksonville and Duval County Public schools to provide free trips for middle and high school students through the My Ride 2 School pilot program



El Paso, Texas

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	15%
Service Area Population	747,495
Service Area	250 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	5.6 million
Operating Expense	\$50.4 million
Farebox Recovery	7.64%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Never suspended fares during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- ◆ Ridership has been on the decline for the past several years and is still below pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Facing a major budget deficit and looking for ways to increase revenue in order to have the deficit not grow
- ◆ Riders are happy with the system but depending on the route SunMetro takes it could decrease satisfaction and ridership even further

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Have increased security force and presence by contracting with Tricorp Security, initially starting with three (3) security officers in vehicles and transition points along routes
- ◆ Works with the local law enforcement as well to respond to emergency issues that require more manpower and containment
- ◆ Have seen an increase in incidents since the beginning of the pandemic, mostly passengers versus other passengers but some drivers involved as well

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Have a dedicated source of funding through a half cent local sales tax
- ◆ Received funding from the CARES and American Rescue Plan to cover some of a deficit picked up by SunMetro
- ◆ Awarded a \$450,000 grant award from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, will help conduct a study to enhance transit services through cost effective methods designed to attract new users, stimulate economic activity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the effects of climate change

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Ridership numbers are at 45-50% of pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Have had to reduce service windows and cut routes to combat low ridership and funding deficit
- ◆ Initiated a series of recovery actions to improve its system, increase ridership to pre-pandemic levels, and stimulate the economy by adding routes; however they have not been able to return to pre-COVID service levels because of driver shortage

## Paratransit:

- ◆ The LIFT service provides curb-to-curb or door-to-door (upon request), on-demand transportation using small buses equipped with mobility device lifts and tie downs, as well as contracting with private operators using regular passenger vehicles
- ◆ Ridership is down 50-60% pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Facing an operator shortage which required streetcar operators to be moved from streetcar operations to fixed route and paratransit services

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ Even though service and routes have been cut, customer and rider satisfaction is around 80-90%, with riders being happy with the service provided
- ◆ Riders want more routes and buses since accessibility has been difficult since the start of the pandemic
- ◆ Improvement actions include optimizing connectivity, increasing frequency and pursuing competitive funding opportunities
- ◆ Main concern from the public is the fact that SunMetro is debating whether to raise fares and end free transfers which could negatively impact low-income and minority riders



New Orleans, Louisiana

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Small-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	23%
Service Area Population	390,144
Service Area	75 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	4.8 million
Operating Expense	\$64.8 million
Farebox Recovery	7.78%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Reduced fares and implemented a new fare structure, only suspended fares entirely for Hurricane Ida and a couple weeks for the pandemic
- ◆ Ridership is still below pre-COVID levels even though operating service is back to 100%
- ◆ The RTA is continuing to improve and add service where they can, improving coverage and frequency is their main goal
- ◆ The public is happy with the RTA's service, continues to support the changes and improvements that are made

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Have a transit police force that can respond to emergency situations and for non-emergency situations customer service can be contacted to send a road supervisor or transit police when needed
- ◆ Have seen an increase in incidents among the buses and throughout the overall system, the main drivers were the mask mandate which was most recently lifted in April
- ◆ Enforce a strict expulsion and suspension policy that can be handled by the RTA Transit police

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Dedicated source of funding through a one (1) cent sales tax, created an agreement in 1999 between the RTA and New Orleans Tourism & Marketing Corp.
- ◆ Have been able to obtain several grants to improve their service and system capacity
- ◆ Partnered with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission to develop a transit system re-design and plan, do not have any other third party or private partnerships
- ◆ Fare revenue for 2021 was \$7.1 million, which accounted for 4.6% of the total revenue earned



## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Did reduce service during the pandemic but are back to running pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Ridership is around 80-85% of pre-COVID levels with the ridership numbers increasing monthly
- ◆ Introduced a new reduced fare structure in 2021 which aimed to simplify the fare offerings, incentivize pass sales for transit riders, and offered financial relief to passengers
- ◆ Completed a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study between East New Orleans and Algiers, the project will improve transit equity, reduce commute times, and deliver fast and efficient service
- ◆ Adding new bus routes in September 2022 with the hope of connecting more riders to the areas they want to travel to and to deliver a better bus service

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Overall ridership for paratransit is down 70-75% of pre-COVID levels, service is operating at its pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Introduced 21 new paratransit vehicles into revenue service which will improve the reliability of services offered, improve on-time performance and provide better comfort for paratransit riders
- ◆ RTA paratransit service provides a shared-ride service using accessible buses and vans to meet the needs of eligible riders, must demonstrate an inability to use RTA buses or streetcars on their own

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ The public has many opportunities to shape RTA service and the development of transit projects through community outreach meetings set up by the RTA or through contacting the board of trustees
- ◆ Building a transportation network focused on equitable service delivery, regional connectivity, and a forward-looking emphasis on the customer experience
- ◆ The RTA's commitment to equity is the core of the agency's values and includes using financial resources to contribute to the community's economic development
- ◆ The public is happy with the service provided by the RTA, especially with the reduced fare structure



Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	15%
Service Area Population	783,134
Service Area	283 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	2.6 million
Operating Expense	\$24.2 million
Farebox Recovery	7.92%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ EMBARK works as a hybrid city department and public trust
- ◆ Did not suspend fares at all during the pandemic
- ◆ Reduced some service but is now back to operating 100% service
- ◆ Ridership is still below pre-COVID levels but slowly climbing back up
- ◆ Are not planning on any expansion or route reevaluations until later years (2025-2030)

## Safety & Security:

- ◆ Rely on the local law enforcement to respond and provide assistance when there is an emergency, also pay off duty office to patrol transit centers and popular transit hubs
- ◆ Have seen an increase in incidents and violent behavior since the start of the Pandemic and especially when masks were required on the buses
- ◆ Enforce rider rules of conduct and can apply an exclusion policy to those passengers who are more disruptive and repeatedly violate the rules, uses a tier system to determine severity of the inappropriate conduct

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Do not have a dedicated source of funding, most of the allotted money is coming from the city's general fund
- ◆ Do not have any outside partnerships or business agreements with third party entities
- ◆ Has been able to receive some smaller federal grants to purchase new buses, as well as other grants to improve their ferry and streetcar systems

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Ridership is around 70% of pre-COVID levels
- ◆ The idea of suspending fares was floated to the board but was never voted on or made a large enough issue to consider
- ◆ Reduced service for a couple of weeks during the height of the Pandemic but are now back to operating at pre-pandemic levels
- ◆ Have increased operator incentives and salaries to try and maintain operators levels, facing an operator shortage

## Paratransit:

- ◆ EMBARK Plus Paratransit service complements the fixed route service and requires an application and eligibility determination
- ◆ Ridership is around 70% of pre-COVID levels
- ◆ Had to reduce service windows for a couple weeks during the height of the pandemic but have returned to pre-pandemic levels

## Community Impacts & Benefits:

- ◆ According to a survey that was conducted in 2021, customer satisfaction has steadily increased and that 78% of customers were either satisfied or very satisfied
- ◆ The main improvement riders would like to see across the EMBARK service would be more frequent weekend service as well as longer service hours on the weekend
- ◆ Other concerns focused on on-time arrivals, availability of accessible bus stops, and overall frequency for the entire service system
- ◆ EMBARK is a critical service for those who are transit dependent and is a critical aspect of short and long term planning within Oklahoma City



Tucson, Arizona

## Agency Statistics (2020):

Agency Type	Mid-sized regional
Urban Area Poverty Rate	15.9%
Service Area Population	828,206
Service Area	335 sq. miles
Passenger Trips	12.3 million
Operating Expense	\$61.4million
Farebox Recovery	0.0%

## Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Suspended fares during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- ◆ Extended free fare service until December 2022
- ◆ Ridership is barely below pre-COVID levels, ~90-95% recovered
- ◆ Have had to adjust service, frequency, and scheduling to accommodate workforce shortage and ridership numbers

## Safety and Security:

- ◆ Have increased the amount of security since becoming fare free, however the increase was not because of fare free service but rather because of the pandemic and external factors
- ◆ Use contracted security service (American Guard Services) and communicate with Tucson Police Department to respond to incidents and issues, both emergency and non-emergency
- ◆ Have seen an increase in non-destination riders, along with increased amounts of passengers loitering and increase in drug use around transit centers and downtown hubs

## Funding Sources:

- ◆ Does not have a dedicated source of funding for transit
- ◆ Has been able to remain fare free due to federal programs such as the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan
- ◆ Do not currently have any outside partnership or business agreements with private entities
- ◆ Sun Tran continues to pursue competitive grants and funding opportunities to upgrade its total fleet and bus facilities

## Fixed Route:

- ◆ Had to reduce service hours and cut trips during the height of the pandemic, slowly adding service back but operator shortage is the main obstacle faced when returning to full service
- ◆ Ridership is still below pre-COVID levels, ~90-95%, but has made a tremendous return, especially in the last four (4) months
- ◆ A BRT-like route is being discussed internally and public outreach meetings were held to see the public's opinion as well as operators

## Paratransit:

- ◆ Ridership is 77-80% of pre-COVID levels but has not seen a stable increase in riders on a month to month basis
- ◆ Sun Van is the paratransit compliment service to Sun Tran, requires an application and eligibility letter from the City of Tucson
- ◆ Sun Van is facing an operator shortage which limits the amount of rides and service it can provide

## Community Impact & Benefits:

- ◆ Mixed feelings about being fare free from the community, some individuals are in support of it as it removes a barrier to entry but others feel unsure about the safety of the system
- ◆ Reliability, improved frequency, and longer service hours are the top items wanted from the public
- ◆ Sun On-Demand, a micro-transit on-demand service, was created to assist in moving riders traveling short distances in specific zones throughout the city
- ◆ Working with multiple non-profits and community organizations to increase ridership knowledge and encourage people to ride while fares are suspended

# Transit Security Synopsis

Sun Tran  
August 2022

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# MEMORANDUM

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Since the pandemic, Sun Tran has experienced a immense number of loiterers at bus stops and at transit centers. They have also experienced a significant increase in blatant (open air) drug and alcohol abuse at bus stops, transit centers, and on buses. The main security challenges on the transit system appear to be a result of these three social problems: 1) drug addiction, 2) mental illness, and 3) poverty. These problems tend to usher those users to be more violent and disruptive than those who do not have these social problems. Additionally, these social problems are more community-wide problems than just transit-centric problems. As such, something that management of the transit system alone cannot necessarily remedy.

Sun Tran has increased its security force and presence in downtown hubs and transit centers, increased safety and security training, not limited just to operators but road supervisors and admin staff as well, improved security infrastructure, fostered critical partnerships with Downtown Tucson Partnership (DTP) and Tucson Police Department (TPD), and increased overall security awareness to riders and users of the transit system.

Attached to this memo, Sun Tran has provided a *Transit Security Synopsis* that attempts to provide detailed answers to Mayor Romero and Vice Mayor Santa Cruz's memo dated June 6, 2022 (*Subject: Fare-Free Assessment & Next Steps*) as it relates solely to security on Sun Tran.

Mayor Romero and Vice Mayor Santa Cruz's memo dated June 6, 2022 also, "...requested staff to come back with a list of recommended actions by the end of August to improve security that we can implement to keep our drivers safe.". Instead of providing recommendations, staff understands the need to move swiftly to address security issues and have changed items from recommendation to action items. Those items are listed within the attached *Transit Security Synopsis* document and are included in the section, "*Security Projects Planned*".

Sun Tran management, employees, and we believe the public are pleased with the progress that is being made to make Tucson's transit system more safe and secure. Sun Tran has already seen significant (positive) improvement relevant to the cleanliness and overall security stance at both Ronstadt Transit Centers (RTC) and Laos Transit Centers (LTC). With that, Sun Tran strives to continually improve and intensify their security stance from both a capital and operational standpoint. In the last couple of months, Tucson Police Department staff's presence within transit centers and along transit routes have increased. As such, legitimate transit riders from various cross sections our community (e.g., seniors, persons with disabilities, children, and families) have started to return to transit. Therefore, if the security efforts are initiated and carried through in in a calculated and consistent manner, we are confident that more bus operators will feel secure in their day-to-day work, the public will migrate back to using public transit more universally, and Tucsonans will have a transit system that they can be proud of supporting.

Sun Tran would like to thank Tucson Police Department, Downtown Tucson Partnership, Rio Nuevo, and American Guard Services for partnering with us to help make Sun Tran more secure for everyone.



Per Mayor Regina Romero and Vice Mayor Lane Santa Cruz's June 6, 2022, **memo (Subject: Fare-Free Transit Assessment & Next Steps)**, this synopsis serves to briefly detail the following from that memo:

- *Safety / incident rates over the past 10 years on a year-by-year basis with a breakdown by incident type (for example fare box disputes, mask mandate, drugs and alcohol, mental health), to the extent possible. Please also break this down by route so that we are able to see whether incidents are more common on certain bus routes, thus requiring a more tailored response.*
- *Proactive measures taken prior to the pandemic, during the pandemic, to address safety issues.*

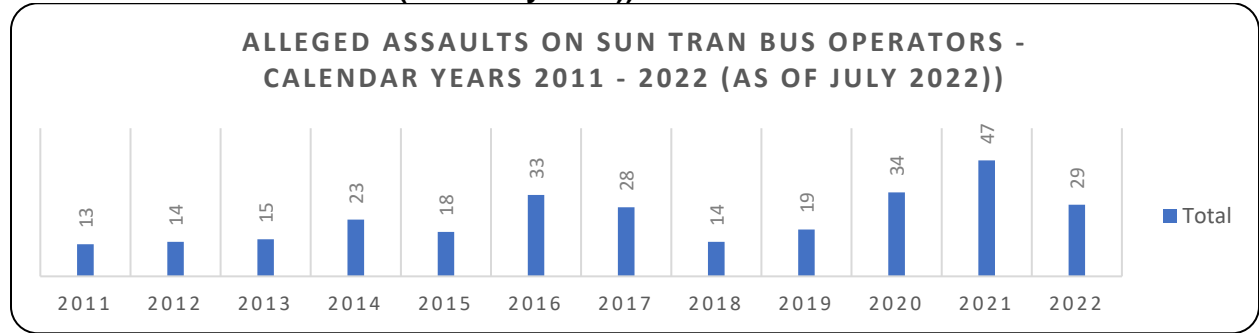
Additionally, in this synopsis, Sun Tran is providing an overview of security projects that they are currently in progress and security projects that are planned for the near future.



- Safety / incident rates over the past 10 years on a year-by-year basis with a breakdown by incident type (for example fare box disputes, mask mandate, drugs and alcohol, mental health), to the extent possible.

Included below (i.e., Figure 1) are the data from calendar year 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022) showing alleged assaults on Sun Tran bus operators.

**Figure 1 - Alleged Assaults on Sun Tran Bus Operators – Totals  
Calendar Years 2011 - 2022 (as of July 2022))**



- Safety / incident rates over the past 10 years **on a year-by-year basis** with a breakdown by incident type (for example fare box disputes, mask mandate, drugs and alcohol, mental health), to the extent possible.

Included below (i.e., Table 1) are the data from calendar year 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022) showing alleged assaults on Sun Tran bus operators by incident type (some data “cause” varies as the data was initially in several different formats and consolidated over time).

**Table 1 - Alleged Assaults on Sun Tran Bus Operators (Calendar Years 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022))**

**[Breakdown by Incident Type – raw data from database comments]**

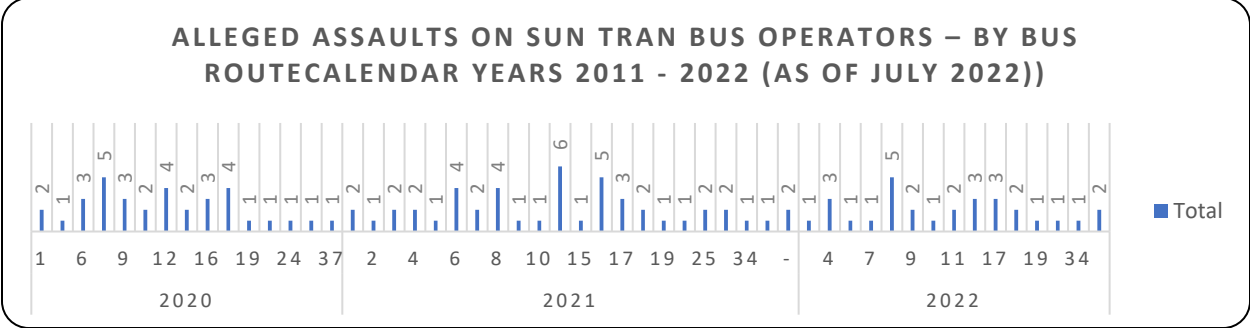
Years	Cause	Totals
2011	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>2</b>
	Unruly Passenger	11
<b>2011 Total</b>		<b>13</b>
2012	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>2</b>
	Unruly Passenger	12
<b>2012 Total</b>		<b>14</b>
2013	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>3</b>
	Unruly Passenger	12
<b>2013 Total</b>		<b>15</b>
2014	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>5</b>
	Unruly Passenger	18
<b>2014 Total</b>		<b>23</b>
2015	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>6</b>
	Unruly Passenger	12
<b>2015 Total</b>		<b>18</b>
2016	Aggressive passenger	4
	Carried passed stop	1
	Driver didn't let passenger off bus	1
	Driver upset passengers	1
	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>18</b>
	Intoxicated	1
	Operators' decision	1
	Refuse Service	1
	Unruly Passenger	3
	Upset Passenger	1
	Verbal argument	1
<b>2016 Total</b>		<b>33</b>
2017	Aggressive passenger	1
	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>10</b>
	Personality Conflict	1
	Unreasonable Operator	1
	Unruly Passenger	15
<b>2017 Total</b>		<b>28</b>
2018	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>6</b>
	Intoxicated/Unruly passenger	1
	Profanity on the bus	1
	Refuse Service	1
	Unruly Passenger	4
	Verbal	1
<b>2018 Total</b>		<b>14</b>
2019	<b>Fare Dispute</b>	<b>6</b>

	Poor Customer Service	1
	Unknown	4
	Unruly Passenger	7
	Verbal argument	1
<b>2019 Total</b>		<b>19</b>
2020	Confrontation with another passenger	1
	Driver went up to passenger and told him to board. Driver was standing in the doorway.	1
	Drop off at a non-bus stop	1
	Fare Dispute	2
	Intoxicated	1
	Lost cell phone	1
	Made him get off bus to board through the rear door	1
	<b>Mask</b>	<b>12</b>
	Passenger cussed at driver	1
	Passenger had been a problem to driver	1
	Passenger pushed driver	1
	Passenger pushed glass window	1
	Passenger pushed partition against driver	1
	Passenger said he allowed her to get assaulted earlier in the day.	1
	Passenger threw coffee on driver.	1
	Passenger upset	1
	Passenger was hitting the partition	1
	Passenger was made to get off the route at the end of line.	1
	Passenger was upset and saying abusive words	1
	Passenger were talking loudly	1
	There was nothing that could of lead to do what the passenger did	1
	Told the passenger to get off at the end of the line	1
<b>2020 Total</b>		<b>34</b>
2021	Assisting Guard	1
	Denied Service	4
	Dispute	1
	<b>Mask</b>	<b>25</b>
	Passenger arguing with another passenger	1
	Passenger did not want to get off bus	1
	Passenger pushed driver	1
	Passenger was asking for help on an intersection	1
	Sleeping on bus	1
	Telling a man to get off the bus	1
	Told the passenger to get off at the end of the line	1
	Unknown	3
	Unruly Passenger	5
	Verbal argument	1
<b>2021 Total</b>		<b>47</b>
2022	<b>Mask</b>	<b>6</b>
	Operator transgressed his authority	1
	Passenger falling asleep	1
	Substance smoked on bus	1
	Told passenger to sit down	1
	Unruly Passenger	19
2022 Total		29
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>287</b>

- *Safety / incident rates over the past 10 years on a year-by-year basis with a breakdown by incident type (for example fare box disputes, mask mandate, drugs and alcohol, mental health), to the extent possible. Please also break this down by route so that we are able to see whether incidents are more common on certain bus routes, thus requiring a more tailored response.*

Included below (i.e., Figure 2) are the data from calendar year 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022) showing alleged assaults on Sun Tran bus operators by bus route. While during calendar year 2021 there were a notable number of alleged assaults on bus operators on the routes 11 and 16 and during calendar year 2022 there were a notable number of alleged assaults on bus operators on the route 8, there does not appear to be a fundamental correlation between specific bus routes and alleged assaults on Sun Tran bus operators.

**Figure 2 - Alleged Assaults on Sun Tran Bus Operators – By Bus Route  
Calendar Years 2011 - 2022 (as of July 2022)**



## National Transit Database (NTD) data to evaluate performance ratios.

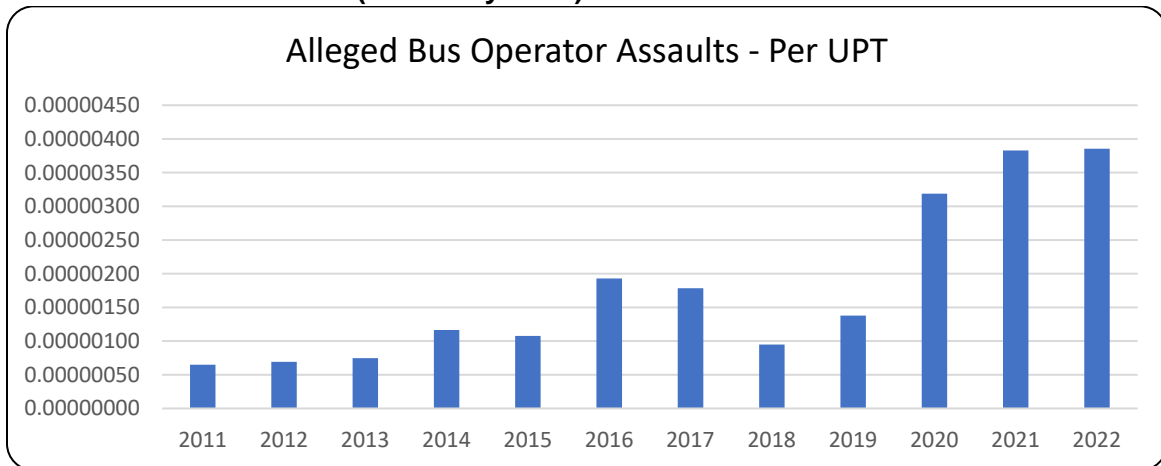
As a recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds, the City of Tucson is obligated to provide the number of Unlinked Passenger Trips (UPTs) as well as Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRMs) relative to Nation Transit Database reporting. Often, this data is useful in providing context as it relates to performance ratios.

Included below (i.e., Figure 3) are the data from calendar year 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022) showing alleged assaults on Sun Tran bus operators per Unlinked Passenger Trips (UPTs). UPTs are reported to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) per their National Transit Database (NTD) reports.

**Unlinked Passenger Trips (UPT)** - The number of passengers who board public transportation vehicles. Passengers are counted each time they board vehicles no matter how many vehicles they use to travel from their origin to their destination.

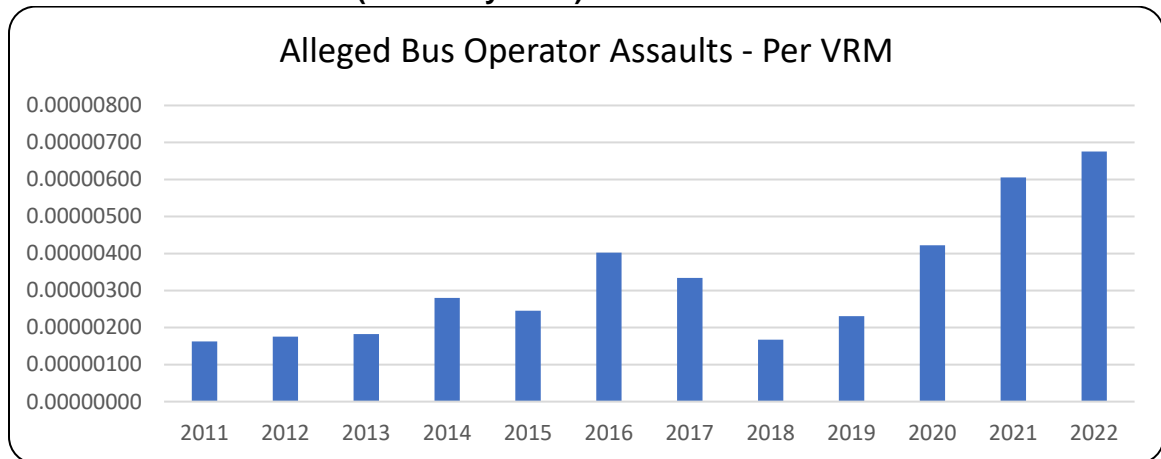
### Figure 3 – Alleged Assaults on Sun Tran Bus Operators Per Unlinked Passenger Trip (UPT)

Calendar Years 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022)



Included below (i.e., Figure 4) are the data from calendar year 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022) showing alleged assaults on Sun Tran bus operators per Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRMs). VRMs are reported to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) per their National Transit Database (NTD) reports. **Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM)** - The miles that vehicles are scheduled to or actually travel while in revenue service.

### Figure 4 – Alleged Assaults on Sun Tran Bus Operators Per Vehicle Revenue Mile (VRM) Calendar Years 2011 – 2022 (as of July 2022)



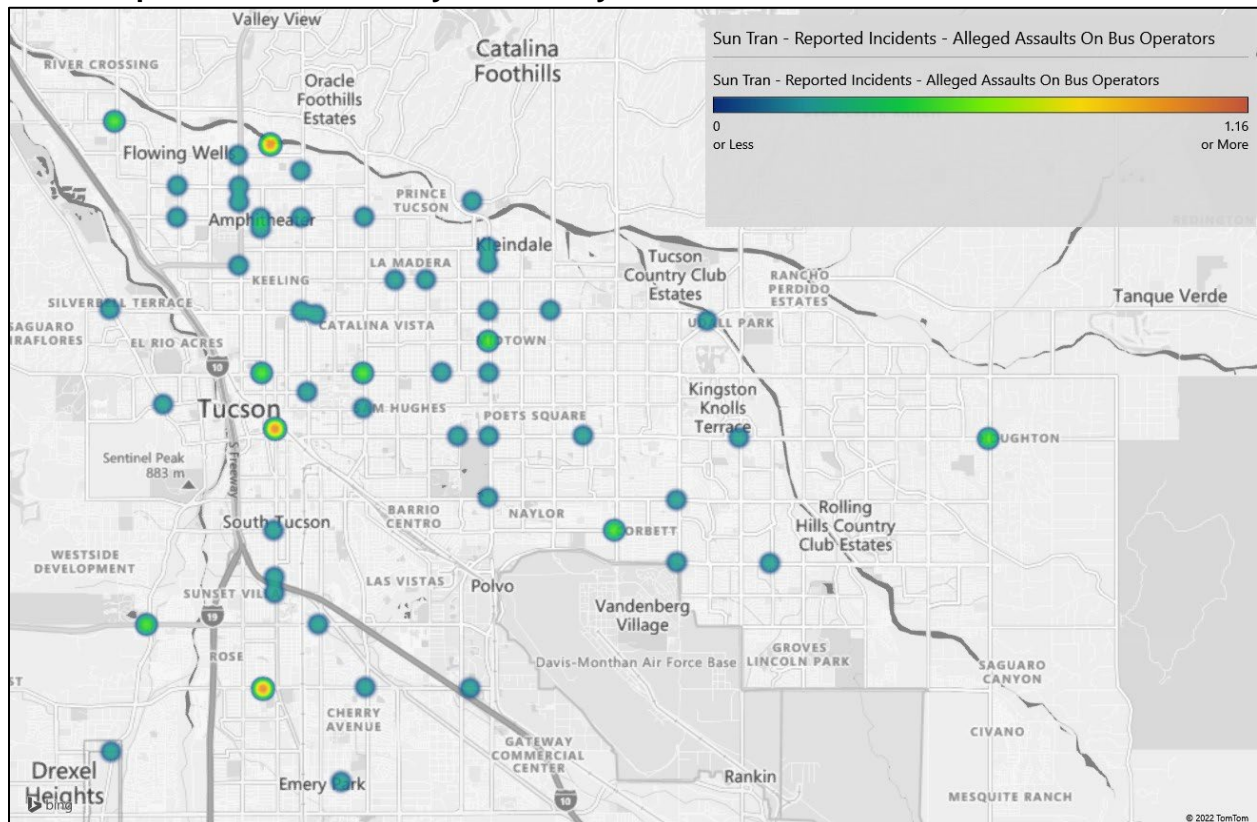
## Locations where most alleged assaults on bus operators occurred.

In addition to the information requested we included an additional piece of data showing where most alleged assaults on bus operators happened by location over the past year and a half.

Between January 2021 – July 2022 there were 75 alleged assaults on Sun Tran bus operators. When plotting the latitude and longitude in Excel and producing a “heat map”, to show where most of the incidents happened, most incidents appear to have happen at/ around transit centers.



**Figure – 5 Heat map showing Alleged Assaults on Bus Operators from January 2021 – July 2022**



- *Proactive measures taken prior to the pandemic, during the pandemic, to address safety issues.*

## **Proactive security measures employed by Sun Tran prior to the pandemic (i.e. since 2018):**

- Increased customer service training
- Developed, “Rider Code of Conduct” to better set expectations with customers.
- Rolled out de-escalation training to bus operators
- Expansion of private security (excluding Rovers)
- Physical improvements at on buses (i.e. partitions)

## **Proactive security measures employed by Sun Tran during the pandemic (i.e. ~February 2020)**

- Expanded private security (added a Rover position in February 2020 and another Rover position in July 2020). Switched security services contractors (i.e. from G4S/Allied Universal to American Guard Services) on January 1, 2022.
- Added partitions to buses that did not already have them
- Ceased fare collection as of **March 21, 2020**
- Implemented rear-door boarding
- Mask Mandate from **February 2, 2021** to **April 18, 2022** (14 months)





## Proactive security measures employed by Sun Tran during the pandemic to present time:

### Capital Projects:

- Replaced/upgraded security camera video recorders in all Sun Tran/Sun Link/Sun Van revenue service vehicles (completed June 2021)
- No climb security fencing at Laos Transit Center (LTC) (completed August 2022)
- Submitted Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – Transportation Security Grant Program (TSGP) competitive grant for No Climb Fence for Tohono Transit Center (TTC) (status TBD based on DHS's selection)
- Surveillance camera replacements at the following locations:
  - Laos Transit Center (completed August 2022)
  - Ronstadt Transit Center (completed August 2022)
  - Tohono Transit Center (in progress)
  - Sun Tran North and South Operation and Maintenance Facilities (in progress)
  - Old Vail Park and Ride (in progress)
  - Broadway and Houghton Park and Ride (in progress)

### LTC Fencing (before)



### LTC Fencing (after)



## Operating Projects:



- Hired dedicated Director of Safety and Security to implement a safety management system (SMS), to oversee Risk Management, Safety, and Training at Sun Tran/Sun Link/Sun Van (completed June 2020)
- Hired a dedicated Security Manager to oversee and implement a security management system at Sun Tran/Sun Link/Sun Van (completed May 2022)
- Fully transitioned to new security services contractor (i.e. American Guard Services) (completed January 2022)
- Increased number of security guards at transit centers as well as Rover positions (i.e. now have three (3) Rover positions (north, mid-town, and south).
- Decaded American Guard Services' vehicles, "Transit Security"
- Partnered with DownTown Tucson Partnership (DTP) to coordinate improved security within Ronstadt Transit Center (RTC) and around the perimeter of RTC.
- Tucson Police Department (TPD) has provided two (2) off-duty officers to patrol ~RTC from 5:00 pm – 10:00 pm seven days/week. This is courtesy of Rio Nuevo.



- In partnership with Tucson Police Department, coordinated Mental Health First Aid Training for Sun Tran Road Supervisors.
- Continued partnership with Tucson Police Department to engage their Zebra units as well as deploy strategic deployment missions (SDMs).
- Continued partnership with the Department of Homeland Security / Transportation Security Administration staff to continue in-person security exercises, assessments, and drills.

## **Future security projects planned:**

### **Capital Projects:**

- Construct no-climb fence at Tohono Transit Center
- Signage replacement projects at all transit centers

### **Operating Projects:**

- Monitor / expand resource allocation as it relates to security guards/security guard hours/days assigned
- Develop improved training program for bus operators that includes:
  - De-escalation/conflict resolution, Mental Health First Aid, and Self-Awareness
- Implement Security Management System Plan
- Engage Active Shooter/Active Killer training and exercises
- Hire roving security guards ride buses on areas where there is chronic loitering at bus stops.
- Hire two off-duty police officers for a one-year period to initially staff Tohono Transit Center (1<sup>st</sup> six months...then be transitioned to different transit centers in a variable manner).
- Work with the City of Tucson, Pima County Attorney's Office and Teamsters Local 104 to endeavor to make firmer penalties for those who assault bus operators.

- **Mayor Romero and Vice Mayor Santa Cruz’s memo dated June 6, 2022 also, “...requested staff to come back with a list of recommended actions by the end of August to improve security that we can implement to keep our drivers safe.”.**

Mayor Romero and Vice Mayor Santa Cruz’s memo dated June 6, 2022 also, “*...requested staff to come back with a list of recommended actions by the end of August to improve security that we can implement to keep our drivers safe.*”. Amongst the security projects already in motion, Sun Tran staff respectfully seek Mayor and Council support relevant to the following requested list of recommended actions:

**Security Problem – Loitering at Bus Stops.**

To address the issue of loitering at bus stops, Sun Tran proposes to deploy rovers in a coordinated effort to mitigate the issues occurring at the bus stops with camping and open-air drug activities. These unauthorized activities are currently being addressed with rovers and Sun Tran supervisors who are dispatched to a troubled location. The unauthorized users recognize the supervisors and rovers leave after a short period of time and often do not have time to return to a location for several hours if ever.

Mitigation of this problem would require coordinating rovers to ride on bus routes that stop at the largest percentage of the problem bus stop locations. These rover positions would be followed by security personnel in transit security vehicles. When a group of negative users is encountered at the stop, both guards can address the issue while the bus continues to next stop. Once the problem stop has resolved the security element can catch up to the bus and re-set until the next problem area is encountered.

Additional funding to support security services contractor to have roving security guards ride buses on areas where there is chronic loitering at bus stops.

- **Estimated cost: \$145,000 / year.**

**Security Problem – Tohono Transit Center (TTC) homeless camping, illicit drug activity, and trafficking of stolen property that is regularly occurring daily at the center.**

To address the issues of homeless camping, illicit drug activity, and trafficking of stolen property that is regularly occurring on a daily basis at the center Sun Tran proposed to request additional funds deploy the same 5-hour shift (7-days a week) for two off duty police officers to work together at the Tohono Transit Center to address the homeless camping, illicit drug activity, and trafficking of stolen property that is regularly occurring on a daily basis at the center. Sun Tran would further suggest that due to the nature of the problem at all the transit centers, after a six-month period at the Tohono Transit Center this program be re-assessed. A probable result of the assessment would include a three-month rotational deployment of the off-duty officer positions to deploy at each of the transit centers.

To be able to garner necessary interest in off duty work, Sun Tran would request to match the current rate of pay the Rio Nuevo group pays for the Ronstadt Transit Center (RTC) deployments.

- **Estimated cost: \$270,000 / year.**

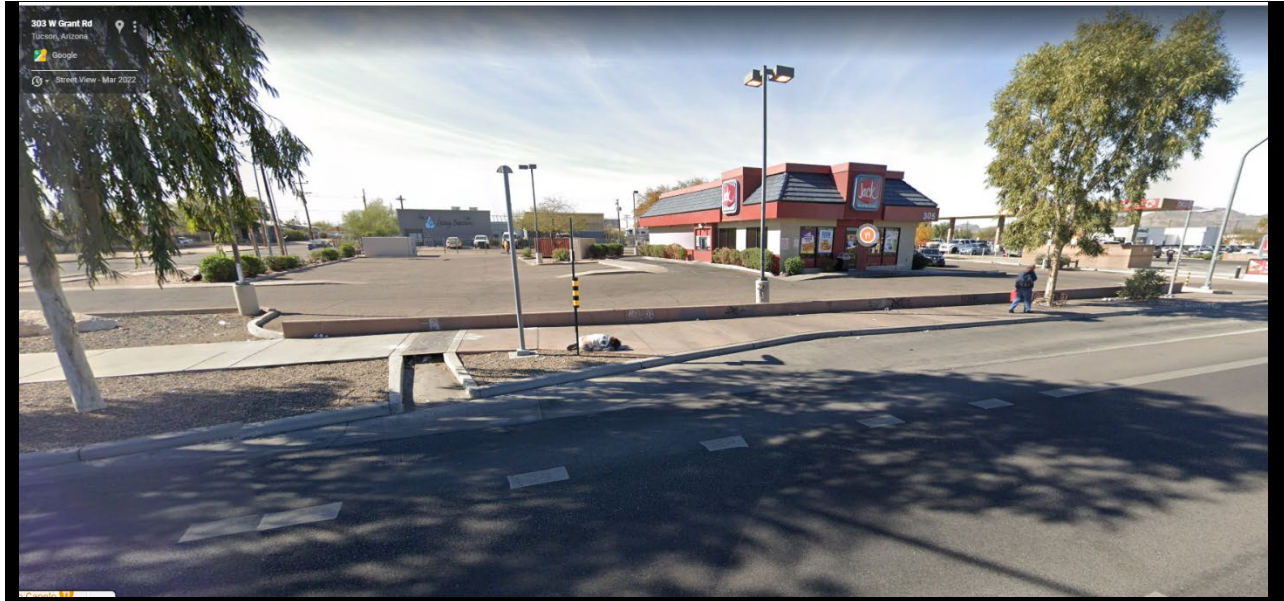
**Security and Problem – Assaults on Bus Operators.**

Bus operators are rightfully feeling apprehensive with regard some of the problematic passengers on the buses and at transit centers. Often bus operators are assaulted and the same/similar passengers who were arrested re-appear within the transit system and/or with the same bus operator. Sun Tran feels the need to make sure these specific criminals suffer the consequences of their actions.

Sun Tran recommends assistance in initiating firmer penalties for those who legitimately assault bus operators.

## Examples of bus stops where security is a concern regarding chronic loitering

Oracle and Grant (photo credit – Google Maps (May 2022))



Oracle and Grant (photo credit – Google Maps (June 2022))



Oracle and Grant (photo credit – Sun Tran Road Supervisor) – Before Clearing and Cleaning



Oracle and Grant (photo credit – Sun Tran Road Supervisor) – After Clearing and Cleaning

