



The Metropolitan Transportation Authority: Safety, Reliability and Frequency

Highlights

- MTA officials recognize the importance of growing ridership to manage its budget and recently noted a key goal of increasing customer satisfaction by 10 percent by June 2024.
- In the Fall 2022 customer count survey, 41 percent of subway riders said they routinely ride the subway less than they did prior to March 2020; personal safety concerns and the ability to work from home were the two most commonly cited reasons for why.
- Recent initiatives seem to be producing positive results for safety, as crime since October 2022 has fallen compared to the same period one year ago.
- On Time Performance improved sharply as ridership dropped at the onset of the pandemic, but then returned to pre-pandemic rates once ridership returned. It was relatively stable through 2022 despite the continued return of ridership.
- MTA bus speeds are among the lowest of any major transit system nationwide, with average speeds systemwide surpassing nine miles per hour in only five months between January 2019 and January 2023.
- Cancellations and terminations on the commuter rails dipped during the pandemic and remain less frequent than they were before the pandemic.
- Roughly 30 percent of bus riders said they used the MTA less frequently than prior to the pandemic, citing service quality and, for express bus, the ability to work from home as the main factors. Bus service delivered was best in Brooklyn and the Bronx with Queens and Staten Island lagging.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is the nation's largest public transit network, serving millions of riders per day across a variety of transit modes, including subways, commuter rail, and buses. The MTA provides key transportation services to residents and visitors in the New York metro area. The MTA has historically been more fiscally dependent upon the fares paid by customers to finance its operations [than other systems](#). Unfortunately, in the wake of the pandemic the MTA, like other public transit systems, experienced significant ridership loss from which it has yet to recover. The Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) has noted the MTA's revenue composition is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic norms over the financial plan period.

To grow ridership necessary for its fiscal stability, the MTA must focus on providing positive customer experiences. MTA officials recognize this and recently noted a key goal of increasing customer satisfaction by 10 percent by June 2024. Integral to achieving such a goal is improving three key service elements: safety, reliability and frequency.

A variety of reporting, as well as the MTA's own ridership surveys, consistently show that these three things matter to riders — particularly those who used to utilize MTA services pre-pandemic but have been slow to return to the system. Specific responses vary across mode types and geographically, but all riders want essentially the same thing: a safe, reliable journey that gets them where they want to go quickly. During the pandemic, the MTA's ability to provide services was altered; while some measures did improve with fewer riders, others saw declines. The MTA must work with its partners and leverage any new funding to identify and report progress on how it will improve these fundamental aspects of service to fulfill its mission and find stable fiscal footing.

Bringing Riders Back: Safety, Reliability and Frequency

Safety encompasses the ability of passengers to use all vehicles and facilities in the MTA's system — including buses, subway and commuter rail cars and stations — without fear of death, injury or property loss. It is most often associated with the MTA's crime statistics, and the transit division of the New York City Department of Transportation. However, safe operation of MTA vehicles during their trips, including the avoidance of collisions and derailments, is also a safety measure for the authority.

In addition, safety can also be related to the perception of crime, including but not limited to customer knowledge of police presence and the frequency with which MTA passengers encounter homeless and mentally disturbed people, as well as crime itself, within the MTA's network. The perception of safety can be as important as statistical safety, at least as far as encouraging riders back into the system.

Reliability is a more straightforward measure. It is the ability of the MTA's various services to meet their schedules, arriving at stations or stops when promised and delivering passengers to their destinations on time. Reliability is related to several measures the MTA makes publicly available: On-Time Performance (OTP), which is the rate at which trains and buses arrive at their final destination on schedule; Mean Distance Between Failures (MDBF), which is the average distance a vehicle travels before it requires repairs; and major incidents, which are snarls on the subway or commuter rail lines that cause at least 50 trains (on the subway) or 10 trains (on commuter rail) to be late, cancelled or terminated. Train cancellations and causes of delay can also contribute to this measure.

Frequency of service refers to the proper scheduling of trains and buses, and adherence to that schedule. OTP is also relevant here, though other measures of additional stop and platform time and additional travel time can provide

greater detail on the source of performance issues. On the commuter rails, where schedules are less frequent but more precise, train crowding is also a contributing metric.

Ridership

Subway ridership consistently reached well over 125 million riders per month in the years preceding the pandemic (and could reach monthly totals as high as 155 million due to seasonal fluctuations). In April 2020, however, it plummeted to just under 11.8 million riders; only about 8.1 percent of April 2019 ridership (see Figure 1, next page). It was not until September 2022 that monthly ridership reached 50 percent of pre-pandemic numbers. Though there has been further improvement in the months since (for example, November 2022, reached nearly 60 percent of pre-pandemic levels), a significant portion of subway riders remain reluctant to return to the system. Weekend ridership has recovered more quickly than weekday ridership, indicating the impact new remote work patterns are having on commuting trends.

Commuter rail ridership has closely followed the same pattern as subway ridership, dropping to under 3.3 percent of pre-pandemic ridership in April 2020 on the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and 6 percent on the Metro-North Railroad (MNR) (see Figure 2, next page). Since then, ridership has recovered somewhat, but monthly totals still remained stubbornly under 60 percent of pre-pandemic levels in 2022. While commuter rail lines are often considered to be safer and more reliable than subway or bus service, they also have more limited stops within the five boroughs and riders often transfer to subway or bus services to reach their final destination in the City. Thus, subway and bus safety, frequency and reliability are also important in helping commuter rail recover ridership.

Bus ridership has followed somewhat different patterns, however. April 2020 bus ridership was just 0.8 percent of what it had been in April 2019

and returned slowly through the summer of 2020 (see Figure 3). Like a number of major systems across the country, given the need to minimize close contact between drivers and riders, the MTA made bus rides free between March 23 and August 31, 2020, which likely contributed to an artificial depression of ridership return. In September 2020, ridership jumped to 48 percent of pre-pandemic levels. Despite the jump relatively early during the pandemic, the MTA has not been able to recover monthly ridership to more than 65 percent of pre-pandemic bus ridership in the more than two years since.

This difficulty in encouraging the final third of pre-pandemic riders to return led the MTA to revise budgetary ridership forecasts downward in its July 2022 financial plan, which does not expect ridership levels to reach 80 percent of pre-pandemic levels until 2026. While some of the decline is due to changing norms around remote work, surveys have also shown that perception of safety in particular is also a concern; if the MTA can assure riders that the system is safe and reliable, while providing consistent service levels, it may be able to improve upon those projections.

In the Fall 2022 customer count survey, 41 percent of subway riders said they routinely ride the subway less than they did prior to March 2020; personal safety concerns and the ability to work from home were the two most commonly cited reasons why these riders said they had not returned as regularly to the system. Those answers were nearly twice as common as concerns with service reliability or the threat of COVID, but nevertheless were a significant improvement over Spring 2022. Similarly, roughly 30 percent of bus riders said they used the MTA less frequently than prior to the pandemic, citing service quality (on local, limited, and select bus service), and the ability to work from home (for express buses) as the main factors. On the commuter rail systems, one-third of riders rode less frequently, citing the ability to work from home as the predominant reason.

FIGURE 1
Monthly MTA Subway Ridership

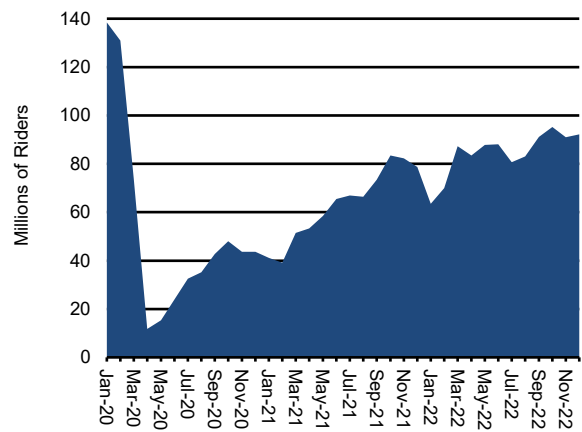


FIGURE 2
Monthly MTA Commuter Rail Ridership

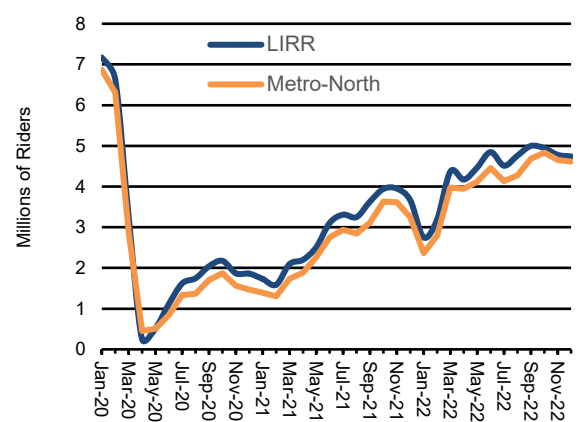
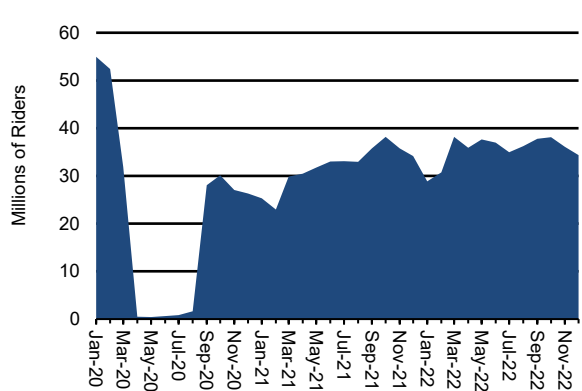


FIGURE 3
Monthly Total Bus Ridership



Source: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Safety

Fortunately, the New York City subway system remains a predominantly safe one. However, since the beginning of the pandemic, crime in the subway system — and in particular, violent crime — has risen on a per ride basis. There were 2,524 major felonies committed in the subway in 2019, only 935 of which were considered “violent.” That number fell in 2020 and remained stable in 2021, as ridership dropped and remained sluggish, but grew with ridership in 2022, when there were 2,334 major felonies committed, 1,183 of which were violent crimes. Violent crime accounted for 37 percent of subway felonies in 2019, but this share rose to 54 percent in 2020 and 56 percent in 2021, before falling slightly to under 51 percent in 2022, despite an 8 percent decline in total felonies between 2019 and 2022.

Furthermore, the growth of crime in the system outpaced the return of ridership. In 2022, for example, there were only 10 murders in a subway system that served over 1 billion riders — meaning a rider stood only a 1 in 100 million chance of being murdered during a trip. But, in

2019, there were just three murders in a system that served roughly 1.7 billion riders. Thus, while the overall probability of any subway rider being murdered in 2022 remained statistically miniscule, it was about five times more likely than it had been in 2019. The overall trend of increases held true for all major felonies during the first two years of the pandemic, even if it has abated somewhat for most felonies in 2022 (see Figure 4). According to preliminary MTA data, crime rates have continued to decrease in the early months of 2023.

Riders intuit this, and despite the figures showing that they are still extremely unlikely to be the victim of violent crime, feel the shift. While the risk they take riding the system remains very low, they did undertake more risk to ride the subway in 2022 (and throughout the pandemic) than they were used to doing. The other shift that riders feel is that what crime there is in the subway is becoming more violent. As noted earlier, subway customer satisfaction results indicated a significant number of riders were using the subway less frequently than they used to, citing personal security as a contributing factor.

FIGURE 4
Annual MTA Subway Crime Statistics
(per 10 million rides)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 vs. 2019
Murder	0.02	0.09	0.11	0.10	500%
Rape	0.02	0.11	0.11	0.12	600%
Robbery	3.24	8.94	6.96	5.97	184.3%
Felony Assault	2.23	5.61	6.13	5.49	246.2%
Burglary	0.04	0.36	0.09	0.07	175%
Grand Larceny	9.32	12.21	10.30	11.29	121.1%
Total Major Felonies	14.87	27.33	23.7	23.03	154.9%
Fare Evasion Summonses	430.37	446.49	809.63	856.56	199%
Other Summonses	127.35	185.85	184.91	326.47	185.7%
Total Summonses	557.72	632.34	994.54	1,183.03	212.1%

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding; Murder, Rape, Robbery, and Felony Assault are considered “violent crimes” while Burglary and Grand Larceny are considered “property crimes.”

Sources: Metropolitan Transportation Authority; OSC analysis

The MTA is aware of the impact safety concerns have on riders and, working with the New York Police Department (NYPD), which is responsible for policing the subway system, has recently taken steps to help riders feel safer on trains. In October 2022, the City and State partnered to add an additional 1,200 NYPD officer shifts to patrol the system through February 2023, to ensure that subway cars are equipped with security cameras and that conductors announce when trains are entering stations patrolled by police officers. The MTA Police Department has also assumed daily responsibility for patrolling subway stations around major transit hubs. These initiatives seem to be producing positive results, as crime since October 2022 has fallen compared to the same period one year ago, and preliminary data from the Fall 2022 customer survey (conducted in November and December), shows that only 44 percent of riders who took the subway less frequently than they used to cited personal security as a factor (down from 61 percent in the spring of 2022). Early MTA data shows these trends improving in 2023.

Likewise, rider perceptions of subway safety are influenced by their interactions with homeless and mentally unstable individuals in the system. In the detailed results of the Spring 2022 survey, more than three-quarters of respondents were less than satisfied with homeless people and people behaving erratically on subway trains. Roughly two-thirds were less than satisfied with homeless people and people behaving erratically in stations. Rider satisfaction improved by 5 to 7 percentage points in all of these categories in the Fall 2022 survey, but still remains low. The October 2022 agreement between the City and State also created two new dedicated units at psychiatric centers and expanded crisis intervention training for first responders to better provide those experiencing serious mental illness with the services they need. The MTA reports that these initiatives have led to more than 1,000 individuals who used to sleep in the transit system now sleeping in shelters.

The NYPD and the MTA have also stepped up enforcement against fare evasion. Despite fewer riders in 2022, NYPD issued more summonses for subway fare evasion than they had in 2019. This resulted in roughly twice as many fare evaders being caught per capita than prior to the pandemic, and the NYPD has reported that they have confiscated weapons from those stopped for fare evasion. MTA officials have suggested the authority loses about \$500 million in revenue to fare and toll evasion each year across all transit modes.

While fare evasion continues to be a major issue, particularly on buses, crime in general is not as significant a factor influencing bus riders. The spring 2022 ridership survey reported that two-thirds of bus riders were satisfied with personal security on buses. In fact, personal security was the category with which the most bus riders were satisfied; crowding, wait time, and unexpected delays topped the list for dissatisfaction.

While riders are even more unlikely to experience a safety issue associated with transit operations, poor maintenance and operations can also lead to derailments, collisions and subway fires (which also threaten worker safety), issues that plagued the transit system in the 1970s when it was in a state of disinvestment. Since 2019, there have been no in-service subway collisions and while derailments rose during 2020, they have been minimal with one in both 2019 and 2023. Buses, where collisions are more likely, saw them decline in 2020, but they remain at slightly higher than levels in 2019. Commuter rail derailments and collisions remain very infrequent and at or near pre-pandemic levels, in part due to a renewed focus on safety at grade crossings where commuter trains can collide with road vehicles. The LIRR's Third Track expansion project eliminated eight such grade crossings and upgraded seven bridges, raising safety levels while allowing for improved service.

The MTA's customer safety initiatives seem to be producing results, as the fall 2022 customer survey (conducted shortly after the new policies were implemented) shows significant improvement in rider satisfaction. Satisfaction with personal security on trains improved by nine percentage points over the spring 2022 survey, reaching 42 percent, while satisfaction with personal security in stations improved seven percentage points to 49 percent. It remains to be seen if the expiration of elements of the recent safety and care initiatives will curtail these positive trends. While there was also some notable improvement regarding homelessness and erratic behavior on trains and in stations, satisfaction remained lowest in those categories, indicating room for the MTA to further improve. Satisfaction with homelessness was only 25 percent on trains and 37 percent in stations, while satisfaction with erratic behavior was 30 percent on trains and 40 percent in stations. Satisfaction with homelessness and erratic behavior at destinations in the City also remained relatively low for commuter rail.

Reliability

While safety is a fundamental need for riders to use transit, reliability dictates the day-to-day ridership experience. During the pandemic, the subway system's reliability showed an inverse correlation to ridership — when the subway has fewer riders, its trains are more reliable. On-time performance (OTP) measures how many trains reach their final destination less than six minutes late. Subway OTP peaked at 95.1 percent in May of 2020, the month after the pandemic drove ridership to its all-time low (see Figure 5). As subway ridership recovered to over 50 percent of pre-pandemic numbers in the spring of 2021, subway OTP declined to pre-pandemic levels and has remained below 84 percent since. OTP has been relatively stable in the months since, despite the continued return of ridership.

FIGURE 5
Monthly Subway On-Time Performance

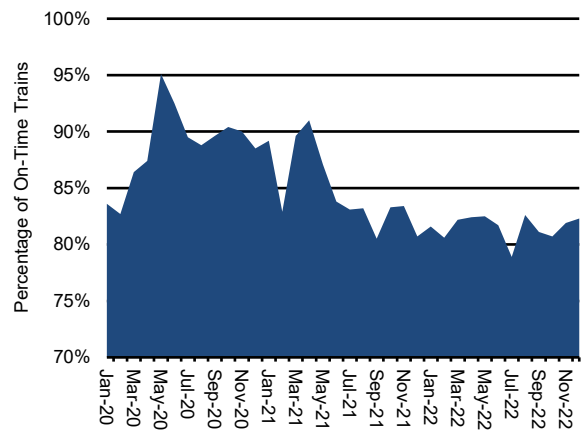


FIGURE 6
Monthly Subway Mean Distance Between Failures

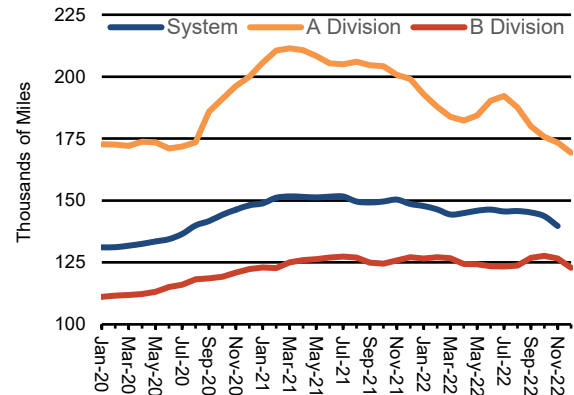
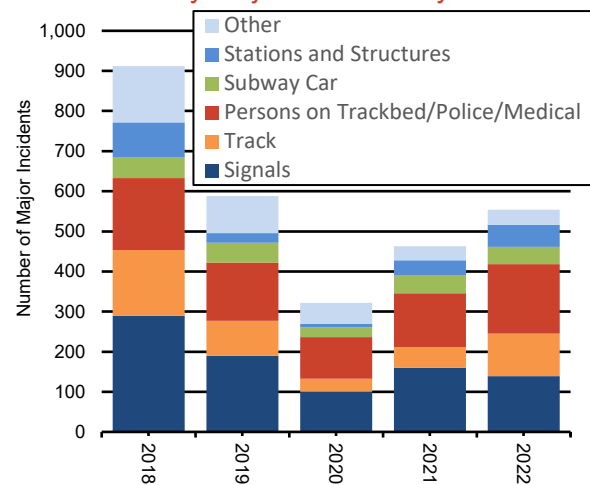


FIGURE 7
Annual Subway Major Incidents by Cause



Source: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Subway Mean Distance Between Failures (MDBF), a measure of how far the average subway car travels before it requires repairs, also improved early in the pandemic before normalizing as riders returned (see Figure 6). MDBF peaked in early 2021 but has trended slightly downward as ridership returned. It is notable that during the height of the pandemic, the MTA experienced difficulties realizing pre-pandemic levels of staff in its maintenance shops, which could have contributed to its ability to ensure car repairs stayed up to date.

Nevertheless, MDBF improved much less and more gradually on B Division trains (the lettered lines) than it did on A Division trains (the numbered lines). A Division trains have historically performed much better than B Division, reaching a height of 211,451 miles in March 2021 compared to just 151,093 miles for B Division trains. The MTA plans to put new Kawasaki R211 subway cars into revenue service in the B Division during 2023, replacing the oldest cars in the system, the 50-year-old Pullman R46 cars currently serving on the A, C, N, W, and Q lines. The MTA is hopeful these cars will have a more positive impact on B Division MDBF than the Bombardier R179s did when they were put into service in early 2020 (the R179s have been plagued by a number of mechanical issues).

Causes of subway delays also indicate that more riders on trains might lead to more incidents. While the MTA used to report the causes of all subway delays, several changes to report formatting and listed causes of delay over the past five years have made it difficult to track that data over time, and the MTA stopped reporting the measure altogether in late 2022. Major incident data, however, remains standardized and is still reported.

The number of major incidents on the subway (incidents which cause at least 50 subway trains to be delayed) was cut in half from 2019 to 2020, falling from 588 to 322 (though the drop was not

as significant as the drop in ridership). As ridership has returned, however, the number of major incidents grew, returning to 554 in 2022. The MTA has made some progress in reducing the number of major incidents under its control, with incidents caused by signals failing from almost one-third of all major incidents in 2019 to one-quarter of major incidents in 2022, while the share of major incidents caused by subway cars also fell slightly. However, the share of major incidents related to passenger behavior (unauthorized individuals on the tracks, and police and medical responses) grew from 24.7 percent of major incidents in 2019 to 31.2 percent in 2022 (see Figure 7, previous page).

Not all major incidents remain within the MTA's ability to control, however. One of the largest causes of major incidents is unauthorized individuals on the trackbed, police responses, and medical responses. Such incidents are not spread evenly throughout the system. Since the beginning of 2020, 30 percent of major incidents caused by such external factors occurred on just three subway lines: the 4, 5 and 6 trains. In 2019, 35 percent of such incidents occurred on those three lines.

Commuter rail OTP did not show the same relationship with ridership as the subway. Though it did peak in April 2020, at the height of the pandemic impact on ridership, at 98.6 percent on the Metro-North Railroad and 98.3 percent on the Long Island Rail Road (see Figure 8, next page), the decline in OTP as ridership has returned has been much more limited. The commuter rails are still largely performing better than they did in the years leading up to the pandemic, when they had difficulty providing better than 94 percent OTP (the agencies' target).

MDBF on the commuter rails experienced an immediate improvement as the pandemic took hold, followed by a decline as riders returned and the authority hired new maintenance and operations workers in the first half of 2021, and

FIGURE 8
Monthly Commuter Rail On-Time Performance

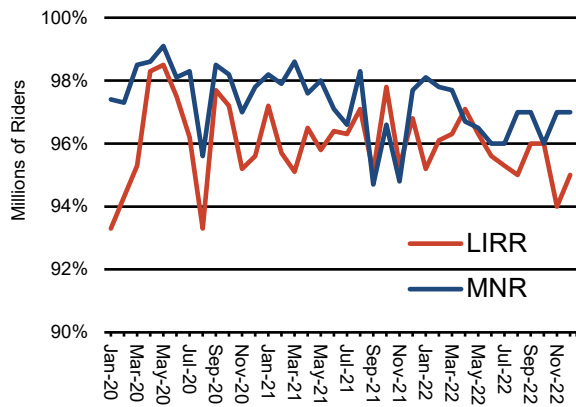


FIGURE 9
Monthly Commuter Rail Mean Distance Between Failures

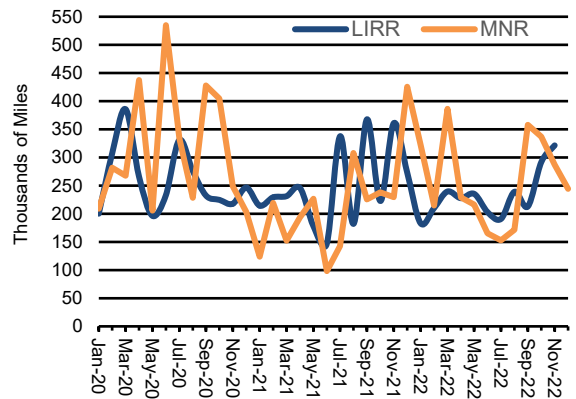
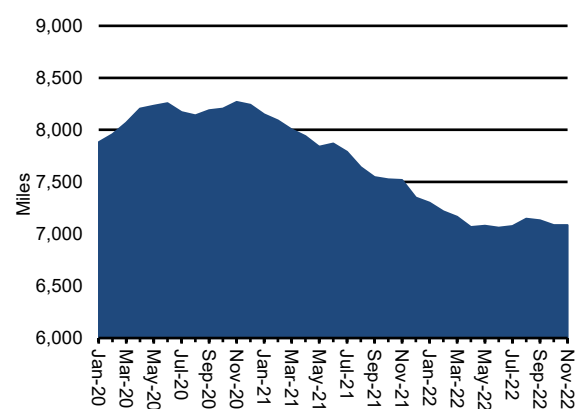


FIGURE 10
Monthly Bus Mean Distance Between Failures



Source: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

MDBF has generally improved since (see Figure 9, next page). Generally, customer surveys suggest that satisfaction on the commuter rails is driven less by the reliability of the commuter rails and more closely dependent upon the cost of fares and the willingness of commuters to make use of the subway and/or bus system once they arrive in the five boroughs (i.e., personal security and erratic behavior at destination).

Cancellations and terminations on the commuter rails also remain less frequent than they were before the pandemic. (Though the MTA no longer reports this data monthly, it is still available annually). On the LIRR, there were less than half as many cancellations in 2022 as there were in 2019. The decline in cancellations is a good sign, as the LIRR ran 90 percent as many trains (the share or trains terminated — that is, cancelled in the middle of their run — remained steady). Metro-North saw nearly one-fifth fewer trains cancelled in 2022, and more than one-quarter fewer terminations, with the number of scheduled trains decreasing by less than 7 percent. However, the average length of delay did increase on both lines (by 6 percent on the LIRR and 13.5 percent on Metro-North).

Like subways and commuter rail, MDBF on buses also declined as ridership returned. Following the drop in ridership over the first few months of 2020, bus MDBF stayed above 8,000 miles from April 2020 until April 2021, peaking at 8,269 miles in December 2020 (see Figure 10). As riders returned, MDBF continued to fall, and did not break 7,200 miles in the last eight months of 2022, a level that is much lower than immediately before the pandemic. While this trend has flattened in recent months, bus riders have indicated that service quality is at the front of their minds and the MTA must improve MDBF to improve reliability.

In the year before the pandemic, bus service delivered mostly remained steady between 97 percent and 98 percent; however, in April 2020, it

dropped to 90.7 percent, its lowest level on record. Though it rebounded somewhat in the ensuing months, it continued to trend back downward thereafter, reaching 91.3 percent again in January 2022. Since then, it has recovered again, but for the second half of 2022 remained relatively flat, just above 95 percent. Service delivered was generally the best in Brooklyn and the Bronx, with Manhattan fairly typical of systemwide numbers and Queens and Staten Island lagging behind. Providing service to customers is the most basic of the MTA’s functions and it must continue to make efforts to ensure that riders can count on their transportation being provided according to schedule if they are to trust in it.

Frequency

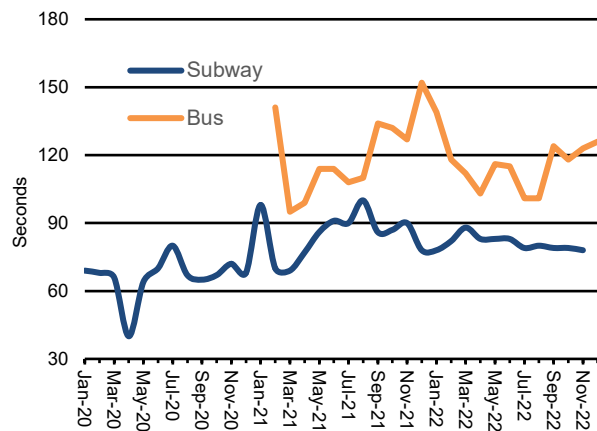
Even if the MTA can ensure riders are safe and provide service that stays on schedule, in order to attract and retain the remainder of its rider base the MTA must remain committed to providing a frequency of service that meets riders’ needs. While there is overlap in the effect of both reliability and frequency on the ridership experience, recent issues with frequency of LIRR trains to Penn Station during rush hour (rather than the Central Business District as a whole, which saw an increase in service), highlight the importance of providing and communicating regular and frequent options for riders to their intended destination. During the height of the pandemic, when the fewest riders were using the system, the MTA made limited changes to service despite the costs of maintaining that service, in order to aid in the regional recovery. The MTA will have to balance any planned service changes with maintaining frequent enough service so that trains are not overcrowded and riders have substantial options to travel in and around the region.

Additional stop (bus) and platform (subway) time are the MTA’s measures of how much extra time the average rider spends waiting at stops beyond

scheduled time between each ride. OSC refers to this extra time spent waiting for the next train or bus as “additional wait time” in this report. The scheduled frequency of subway trains depends on the time of day. Trains are generally scheduled to run every 2-5 minutes during peak hours (6:30 a.m.–9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.–8:00 p.m.), every 5-10 minutes during the midday period, and every 5-15 minutes until midnight. Between midnight and 6:30 a.m. subways generally run every 20 minutes or so. Bus schedules vary significantly and are generally less frequent.

During the height of the pandemic, when very few riders were using the subway, additional wait time reached just 40 seconds; however, as riders returned to the system, it has risen. Additional platform time remained elevated throughout 2022 when compared to pre-pandemic levels (see Figure 11). The MTA does not report additional wait time for buses for 2020, but data for 2021 and 2022 appears to be seasonally correlated; additional wait times during fall and winter months were significantly higher than wait times in the spring and summer.

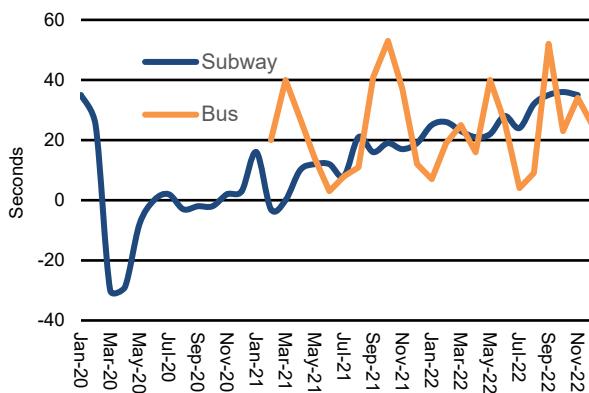
FIGURE 11
Monthly Additional Wait Time



Source: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Additional Travel Time (ATT), referred to as Additional Bus Travel Time for buses and Additional Train Time for subway, is the MTA's measure of how much extra time the average rider spends on the subway or bus beyond the time each trip is scheduled to take. As might be expected, ATT on subways is inverse to on-time performance, however, it closely follows ridership trends as well. After dropping to negative 30 seconds for subway in March 2020 (meaning subway trips actually took *less* time than scheduled), ATT managed to remain close to schedule through the end of 2020 but has since returned to pre-pandemic levels (see Figure 12). The MTA does not maintain a database of ATT prior to 2021 for buses. However, ATT on buses in 2021 and 2022 seems to spike the fall, perhaps correlating with the return of students to schools.

FIGURE 12
Monthly Additional Travel Time



Source: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

MTA bus speeds are among the lowest of any major transit system nationwide, with average speeds systemwide only surpassing nine miles per hour in five months between January 2019 and January 2023. In May 2022, The New York League of Conservation Voters estimated that about 43 percent of bus travel times have been spent at bus stops or red lights. The pandemic does not appear to have had much impact on bus speeds, aside from spring of 2020 when less traffic on City streets likely enabled speeds to

remain slightly elevated for several months. Bus speeds in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan seem to be somewhat below systemwide averages, while average speeds in Queens are notably higher and speeds on Staten Island can routinely top 14 miles per hour. The MTA is in the process of redesigning bus routes in an effort to address these issues, and recent improvements in bus lane violation enforcement may also help to improve bus speeds.

Conclusion

As the MTA faces substantial budgetary gaps due to changes in ridership, the Authority has made it clear it is focused on the customer experience, which varies across the modes of transit. This focus is critical at a time that the MTA is looking for new tax revenue to maintain service while enhancing existing sources of operating revenue by encouraging ridership. This analysis acknowledges the arc of the main components of the ridership experience since the beginning of the pandemic and identifies areas of where improvement has already occurred while suggesting aspects where further work is needed.

Much of the data concerning the metrics used to assess Safety, Reliability, and Frequency is published on the MTA's publicly accessible on-line performance dashboard. This transparency is a key aspect of working to improve riders' perception of the system, and the MTA is right to commit to updating this data regularly. Providing monthly cause of delay data, as the MTA used to do in its monthly committee meetings, would be a useful addition to the dashboard, however.

Providing safe, reliable and frequent service will be critical for the Authority's ability to manage its fiscal issues by bringing riders back who have alternative commuting choices, including working from home. Maintaining its focus and tweaking its service to address challenges and build on areas of improvement are lofty goals it should continue to address and report on. Advances in safety and maintenance of reliability in recent months have

shown the MTA can make progress working with its regional partners and riders.

Prior efforts, such as the Subway Action Plan, also show that focused efforts can be successful at allocating funds and tracking if and how they are bettering key aspects of the ridership experience. A return to pre-pandemic levels of frequency and reliability for some indicators, however, suggest there is more to improve on as well. With the potential for new funds made available for the Authority through the State budget process, it is critical that it be clear on the steps it is taking to use those funds to improve these indicators. Communication with riders remains a critical tool for improving the ridership experience and recent efforts to adjust service highlight the importance of reporting potential changes and what it means for riders. Ultimately, the provision of a better customer experience will benefit the Authority's fiscal position and the economic recovery of the region.

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