



2023 Texas Transit Statistics - Executive Summary

Prepared by:

Public Transportation Division

In cooperation with public transit agencies and local officials
throughout the state of Texas

PREFACE

The information presented in this report is a tabulation of the data provided by transit systems throughout the state of Texas. Information on public transportation grants was provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). This information has not been audited by the Texas Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Division (PTN). This 2023 report provides detailed comparisons of annualized fiscal year (FY) 2022 and 2023 data along with the monthly FY 2023 transit statistics.

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2023 Texas Transit Statistics Report

Executive Summary

Introduction

The 2023 Texas Transit Statistics Report includes State Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 operational and service performance data from Texas transit providers in rural, urban, and metropolitan areas of the state. The body of the report contains five years of data from FY 2019 to FY 2023. This executive summary focuses on year-over-year trends from 2022 and five-year trends from 2019. **Overall, the report provides an indication that transit service and use in Texas is continuing to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

As required by the National Transit Database, one new factor impacting the FY 2023 data is the 2020 Decennial Census. The results from the 2020 Census caused several changes to the classification of rural and urban areas in the state:

- Amarillo and College Station—Bryan changed from being small urban areas to being large urban areas.
- McKinney was combined with Frisco and became a new large urban area.
- Eagle Pass changed from a rural area to a small urban area.
- New Braunfels became a separate small urban area and is no longer part of the San Antonio urban area.
- Galveston was combined with Texas City, together forming a small urban area.

These classification changes impact interpretation of FY 2023 Large Urban, Small Urban, and Rural Transit District totals in FY 2023 because of the districts that changed categories. To help avoid confusion, if a transit district is in a new category as of FY 2023, all of that district's historical data will be included in the new category. For example, Amarillo switched from a Small Urban Transit District to a Large Urban Transit District in FY 2023. Amarillo's data from FY 2019 to FY 2023 is included in the Large Urban Transit District category.

Key Transit System Performance Measures: 2019 to Now

Transit service in Texas continues to recover from pandemic impacts, and there are many signs suggesting that service levels and ridership are heading in a positive direction; service is nearly within 2% of to pre-pandemic (FY 2019) levels while ridership is at about 75% of pre-pandemic levels. This executive summary focuses on six key transit system performance measures, including safety, ridership, service levels, cost efficiency, cost effectiveness, and vehicle reliability. The executive summary focuses on two comparisons: comparing FY 2023 to FY 2019 and comparing FY 2023 to FY 2022. In this executive summary, all percentages are rounded to whole numbers and all years stated are fiscal years.

SAFETY

Statewide, transit-related safety incidents have increased over 2019 levels and are higher than last year. The National Transit Database defines “safety incidents” as fatalities, injuries, and/or property damage costing above \$25,000. The transit-related safety incident rate, measured as the number of safety incidents reported per one million vehicle miles, is higher statewide compared to both last year and 2019 levels. The increase in safety incidents this year can partially be attributed to an increased emphasis by TxDOT on detailed and timely reporting done by Transit Agencies across Texas, leading to a more accurate picture of the reality of transit safety. Chart ES-1 displays the change in the safety incident rate from 2023 to 2022. Chart ES-2 displays the change in the safety incident rate from 2023 to 2019.

CHART ES-1. TRANSIT-RELATED SAFETY INCIDENT RATE PER MILLION MILES FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2022

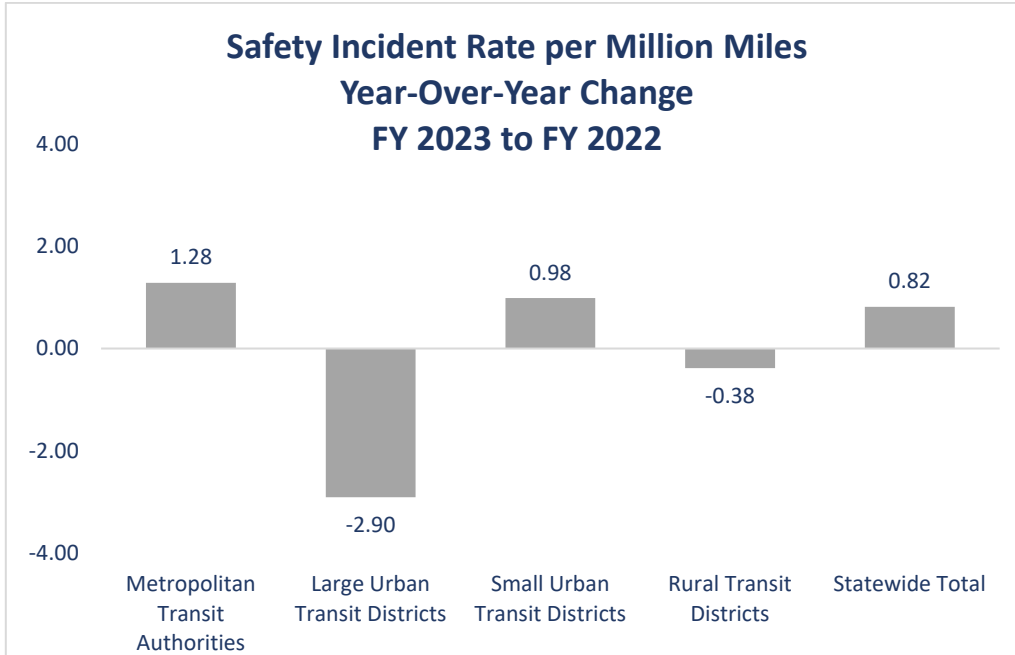
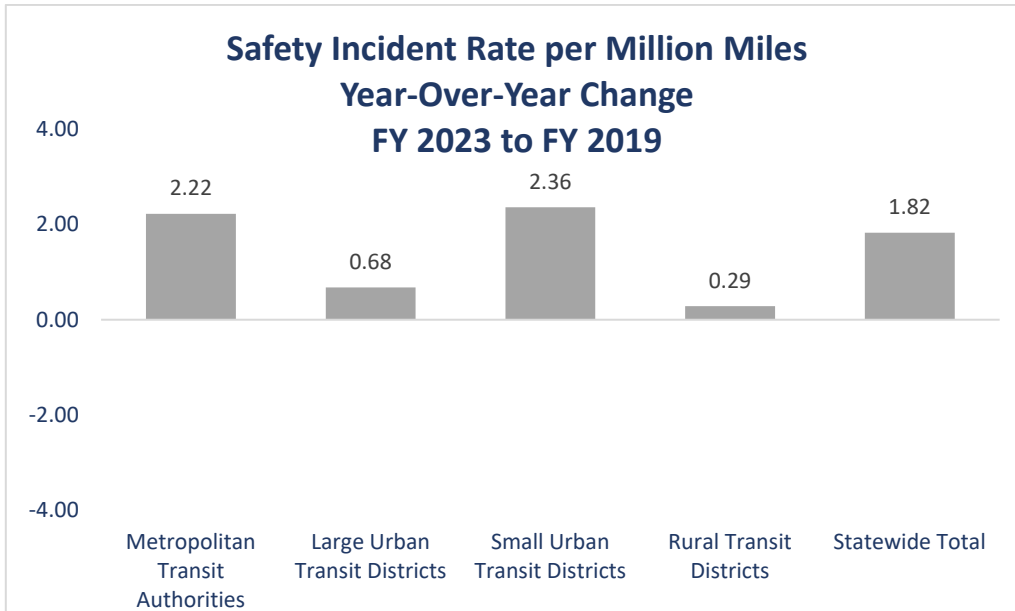


CHART ES-2. TRANSIT-RELATED SAFETY INCIDENT RATE PER MILLION MILES CHANGE FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2019



- **Metropolitan Transit Authorities:** Reported a safety incident rate that was 1.28 higher than last year and 2.22 higher than 2019.
- **Large Urban Transit Districts:** Reported a 2.90 decrease from last year. However, the rate remains 0.68 higher than 2019.
- **Small Urban Transit Districts:** Reported a safety incident rate that was 0.98 higher than last year and 2.36 higher than before 2019. Although several agencies reported an increase, the Arlington and Beaumont districts experienced the most significant increases compared to 2019 levels.
- **Rural Transit Districts:** Reported a safety incident rate that was 0.38 lower than last year but remains 0.29 higher than 2019.
- **Statewide Total:** The safety incident rate increased over last year from 5.68 to 6.49 incidents per million miles. The 2023 rate increased by 1.82 since 2019.

Transit-related fatalities and injuries have also increased from to last year and remain higher than 2019 levels. Fatalities and injuries to people have increased statewide by 12% over 2022, driven mainly by an increase in metropolitan areas. The cost of damage caused by transit-related crashes between buses, trains, automobiles, and property has decreased by 47%. Although the cost of damage is decreasing, the continued upward trend in safety incidents, fatalities, and injuries is concerning.

RIDERSHIP

People are riding transit more than last year across all transit agency types. Statewide ridership, measured as the number of boardings on transit vehicles, increased in 2023. **However, ridership is not back to 2019 levels; 2023 ridership reached 75% of 2019 totals**, progress that is in line with national trends. Chart ES-3 displays 2023 ridership as a percentage of 2022 ridership. Chart ES-4 displays 2023 ridership as a percentage of 2019 ridership.

CHART ES-3. RIDERSHIP IN FISCAL YEAR 2023 COMPARED TO FISCAL YEAR 2022

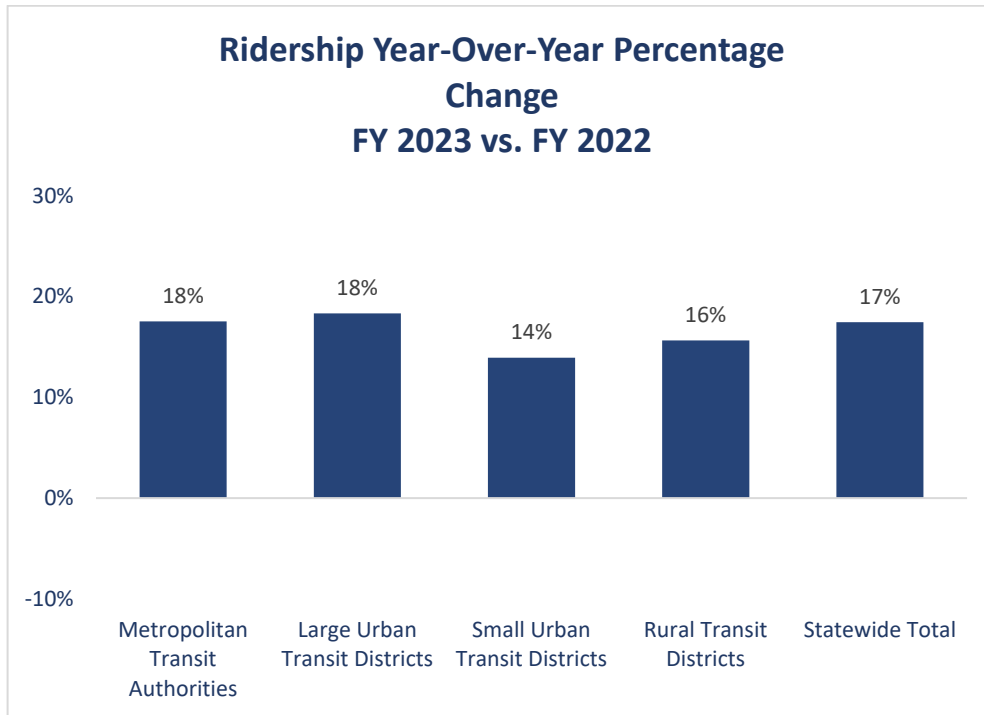
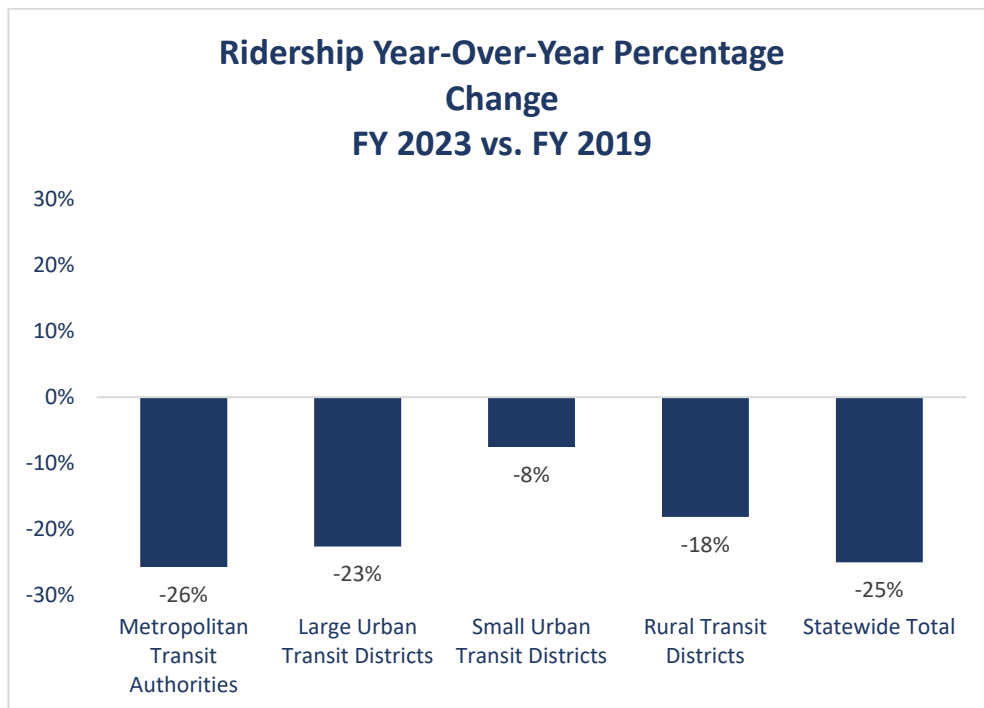


CHART ES-4. RIDERSHIP IN FISCAL YEAR 2023 COMPARED TO FISCAL YEAR 2019



- **Metropolitan Transit Authorities:** Reported an 18% increase in ridership over last year. Ridership is at 74% of 2019 levels.
- **Large Urban Transit Districts:** Reported a 18% increase in ridership over last year, the most significant growth of all transit district types. Ridership is at 77% of 2019 levels.
- **Small Urban Transit Districts:** Experienced a 14% increase in ridership over last year, the slowest of all transit district types. However, Small Urban Transit District ridership is at 92% of 2019 levels.
- **Rural Transit Districts:** Reported a 16% increase in ridership over last year. Ridership is at 82% of 2019 levels.
- **Statewide Total:** About 30.5 million additional passengers rode transit in 2023, an 17% increase over 2022. Statewide ridership is at 75% of 2019 levels. 68.4 million additional passengers would be needed to return to 2019 levels, mostly due to Metropolitan Transit Authorities still missing about 63.3 million of their 2019 passengers.

Some of the ridership reported within the Small Urban Transit District group is due to the Census designation changes of Eagle Pass and New Braunfels. Also, some Small Urban Transit Districts such as Arlington and Grand Prairie saw increases in ridership from expanding new services like microtransit. Most transit agencies across the state have recovered at least 75% of their 2019 ridership levels.

SERVICE LEVELS

Bus and rail service increased this year, and service has virtually returned to 2019 levels across the state. Transit service levels, measured through vehicle revenue miles, increased at all agency types in 2023 compared to the prior year. Although not all transit agency types have recovered to 100% of their 2019 service levels, all agency types were operating at least 98% of 2019 miles. Chart ES-5 displays 2023 vehicle revenue miles as a percentage of 2022 vehicle revenue miles. Chart ES-6 displays 2023 vehicle revenue miles as a percentage of 2019 vehicle revenue miles.

CHART ES-5. VEHICLE REVENUE MILES IN FISCAL YEAR 2023 COMPARED TO FISCAL YEAR 2022

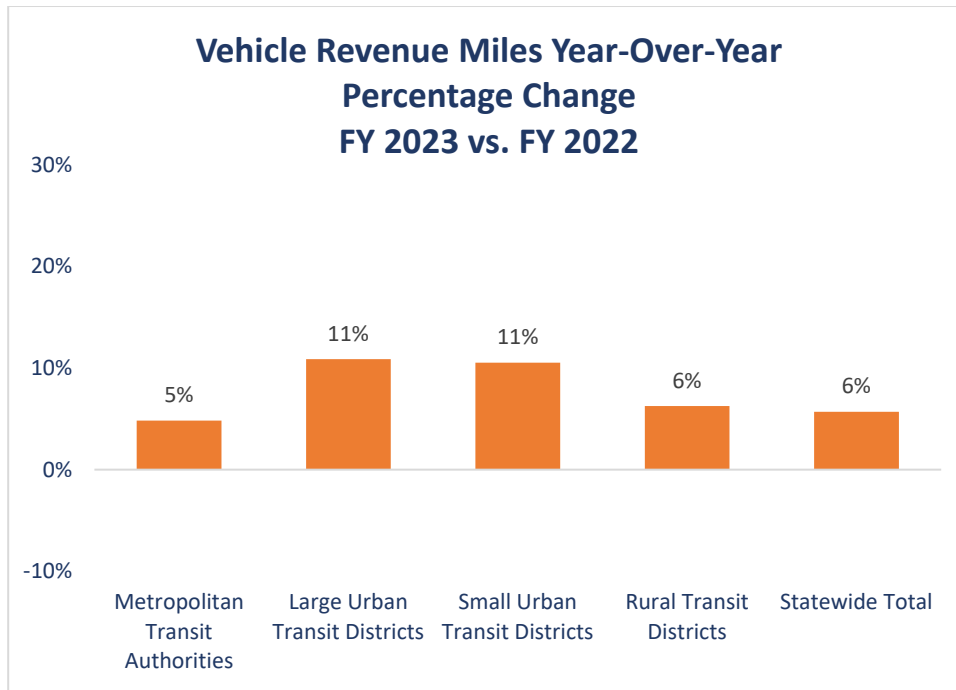
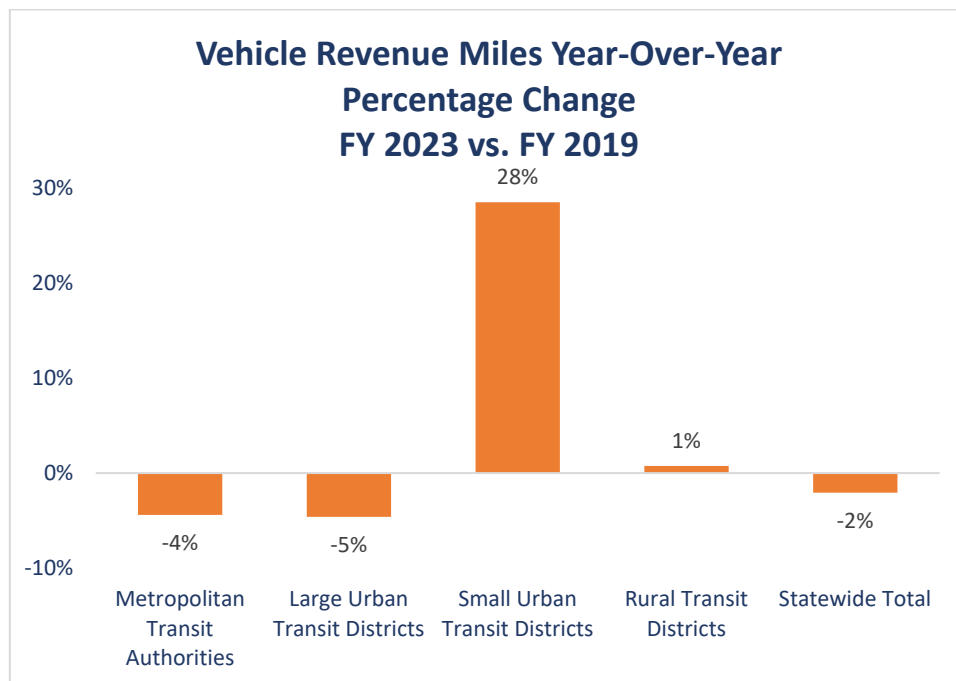


CHART ES-6. VEHICLE REVENUE MILES IN FISCAL YEAR 2023 COMPARED TO FISCAL YEAR 2019



- **Metropolitan Transit Authorities:** Experienced the smallest percentage increase (5%) over their 2022 service levels. Metropolitan Transit Authorities have returned to 96% of their 2019 service levels.
- **Large Urban Transit Districts:** Reported an 11% increase over last year, which, like Small Urban Transit Districts, was the largest increase out of the transit agency types. Large Urban Transit Districts have returned to 95% of their 2019 service levels.
- **Small Urban Transit Districts:** Reported an 11% increase over last year. Small Urban Transit Districts have exceeded 2019 service levels, operating 128% of their 2019 miles.
- **Rural Transit Districts:** Reported an increase of 6% over last year. Rural Transit Districts have exceeded their 2019 service levels, operating 101% of their 2019 miles, despite some service data now being counted as small urban that was previously reported as rural.
- **Statewide Total:** Service levels increased by 6% compared to 2022, an increase of 13.2 million miles. Service levels are at 98% of 2019 miles.

As seen in the charts above, Small Urban and Rural Transit Districts have even exceeded their 2019 service levels. Some of the increase in the Small Urban category can be attributed to a few transit districts (e.g., Arlington and Grand Prairie) operating new services such as microtransit. Also, the Census designation changes have a small impact on the increase in small urban miles (i.e., service in Eagle Pass and New Braunfels is counted as small urban in 2023 but not in 2019).

The year-over-year growth in service and operating close to 2019 service levels suggest that transit agencies are working to restore the level of service provided across the state, albeit the growth in service is somewhat slower in larger metropolitan areas.

COST EFFICIENCY

Inflation and other industry cost pressures have increased the overall cost of running transit over the last 5 years. Transit is impacted by the same inflationary pressures driving up costs for virtually all other industries. A measure of cost efficiency is the cost per revenue mile, calculated as operational costs (excluding costs of buying capital assets) divided by the number of vehicle revenue miles provided. Statewide, the cost per revenue mile increased modestly compared to last year. Inflation's impact on the cost of operating transit can be especially seen when comparing 2023 cost per revenue mile to that before 2019. Chart ES-7 displays the percentage change in cost per revenue mile from 2023 to 2022. Chart ES-8 displays the percentage change in cost per revenue mile from 2023 to 2019.

CHART ES-7. COST PER REVENUE MILE PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2022

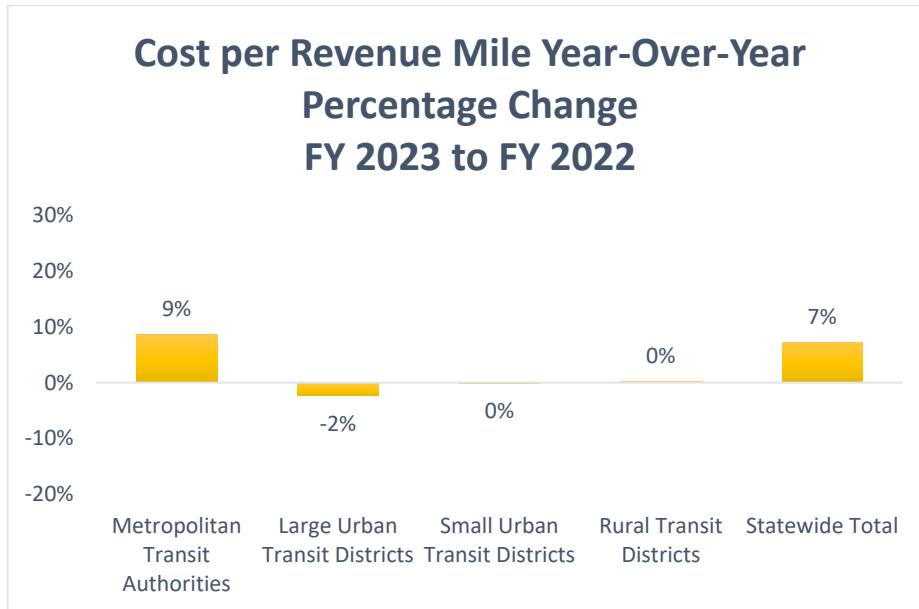
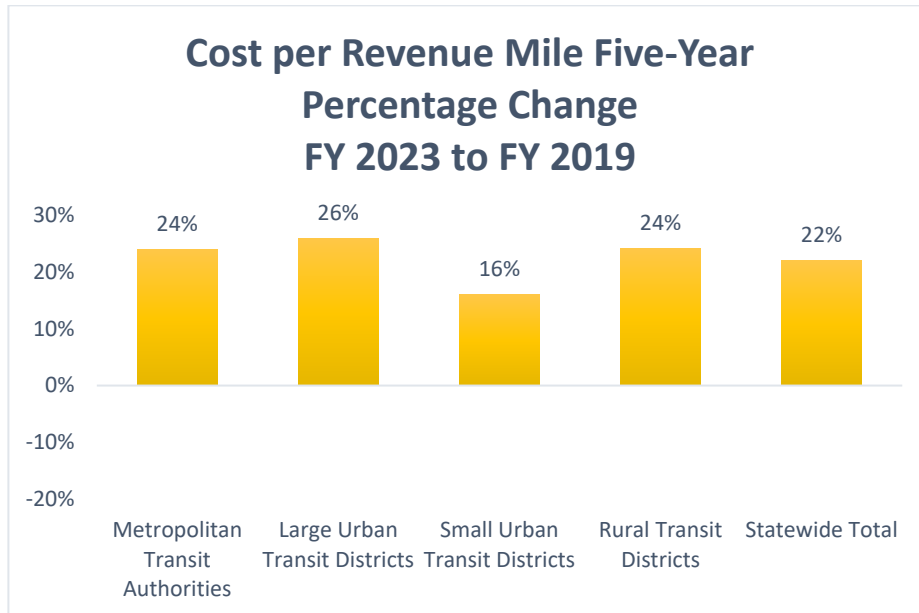


CHART ES-8. COST PER REVENUE MILE PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2019



- **Metropolitan Transit Authorities:** Show a 9% increase in cost per revenue mile compared to last year and a 24% increase compared to 2019, the most significant increases across transit agency types.
- **Large Urban Transit Districts:** Reported a 2% decrease in their cost per revenue mile compared to last year, due in part to the increased use of alternative services that, at least in 2023, had a lower cost profile. Large Urban Transit Districts experienced a 26% increase in cost per revenue mile compared to 2019 levels.
- **Small Urban Transit Districts:** Had a flat cost per revenue mile compared to last year, reporting a less than 1% decrease. Small Urban Transit Districts experienced a 16% increase in cost per revenue mile compared to 2019.
- **Rural Transit Districts:** Had a flat cost per revenue mile compared to last year, reporting a less than 1% increase. Rural Transit Districts experienced a 24% increase in cost per revenue mile compared to 2019.
- **Statewide Total:** Cost per revenue mile increased by 7% over last year, an \$0.84 increase from \$11.64 to \$12.48 per mile. The statewide total is significantly impacted by the cost per revenue mile at Metropolitan Transit Authorities, which reported a cost per revenue mile of \$15.04 in 2023. Statewide, the 2023 cost to operate a mile of transit service is \$2.25 (22%) higher than 2019.

The cost per revenue mile in 2023 compared to 2019 shows that inflation has increased the cost of operating transit; however, cost increases over last year suggest that cost growth may be slowing back to typical year-over-year trends.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

Increased ridership and slower cost growth in 2023 resulted in improved cost effectiveness of transit. A measure of cost effectiveness is the cost per passenger trip, calculated as operational costs divided by the number of passenger trips. All transit agency types reported improved or flat cost effectiveness in 2023 compared to 2022. However, the statewide cost per passenger trip is still significantly higher than in 2019. Chart ES-9 displays the percentage change in cost per passenger trip from 2023 to 2022. Chart ES-10 displays the percentage change in cost per passenger trip from 2023 to 2019.

CHART ES-9. COST PER PASSENGER TRIP PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2022

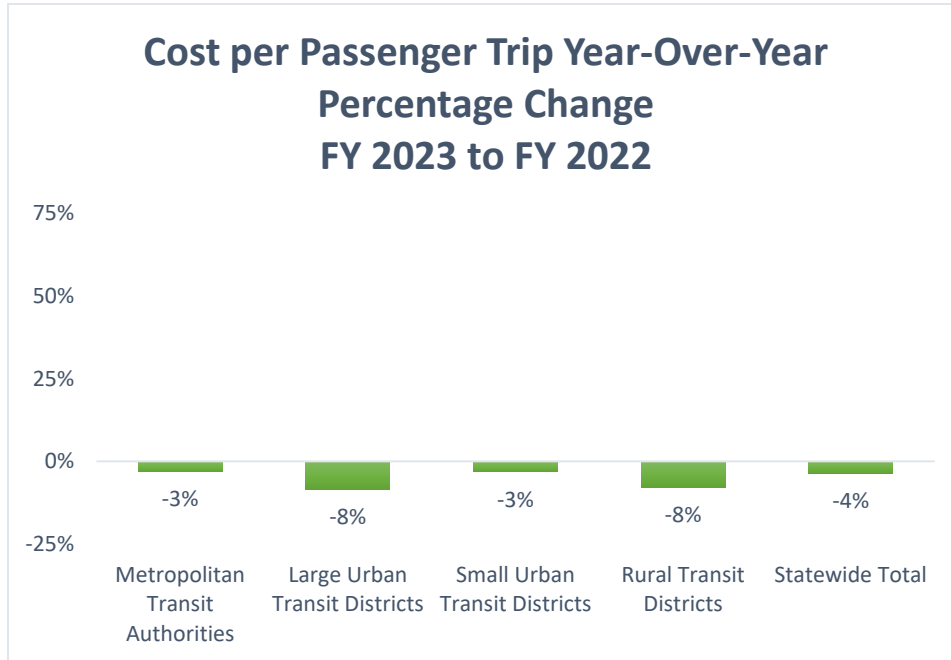
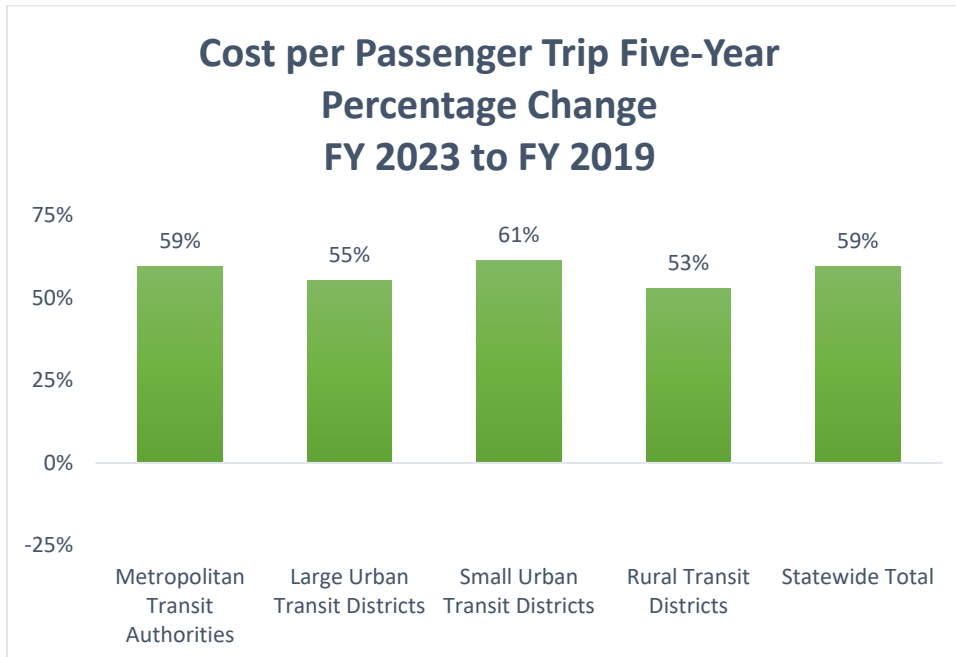


CHART ES-10. COST PER PASSENGER TRIP PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2019



- **Metropolitan Transit Authorities:** Reported a 2023 cost per passenger trip that was 3% lower than last year but 59% higher than 2019. Although costs continued to increase in 2023, the increased ridership in 2023 helped improve cost effectiveness.
- **Large Urban Transit Districts:** Reported a 8% decrease in their 2023 cost per passenger trip, due both to increased ridership and relatively flat cost growth from last year. The cost per passenger trip was 55% higher than in 2019.
- **Small Urban Transit Districts:** Reported a 3% decrease in their 2023 cost per passenger trip compared to last year and a 61% increase compared to 2019.
- **Rural Transit Districts:** Reported an 8% decrease in the cost per passenger trip compared to last year. However, the Rural Transit District cost per passenger trip remained 53% higher than in 2019.
- **Statewide Total:** The cost per passenger trip reduced by \$0.53 (4%) compared to last year. The statewide cost per passenger trip is largely driven by Metropolitan Transit Authorities, which reported a cost per passenger trip of \$14.66 in 2023. The statewide cost per passenger trip is \$5.39 (59%) higher than 2019.

As seen from the charts above, the cost per passenger trip statewide and across all transit agency types is higher than before 2019—driven largely by lower ridership numbers but also due to increases in the cost of labor, fuel, and supplies. On the other hand, cost effectiveness is improving across the state, with the cost per passenger trip being 4% lower than last year. It remains to be seen if ridership will continue to increase, offsetting the inflationary pressures challenging all industries, including transit.

VEHICLE RELIABILITY

Breakdowns continue to be up throughout the state, especially in metropolitan areas when compared to 2019 levels. However, other areas are exceeding or are close to 2019 vehicle reliability. Vehicle reliability, measured by the number of miles between vehicle failures, generally experienced a decrease in 2023. Changes in vehicle reliability are mixed when comparing current data to data before 2019. Chart ES-11 displays the percentage change in miles between vehicle failures from 2023 to 2022. Chart ES-12 displays the percentage change in miles between vehicle failures from 2023 to 2019.

CHART ES-11. MILES BETWEEN VEHICLE FAILURES PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2022

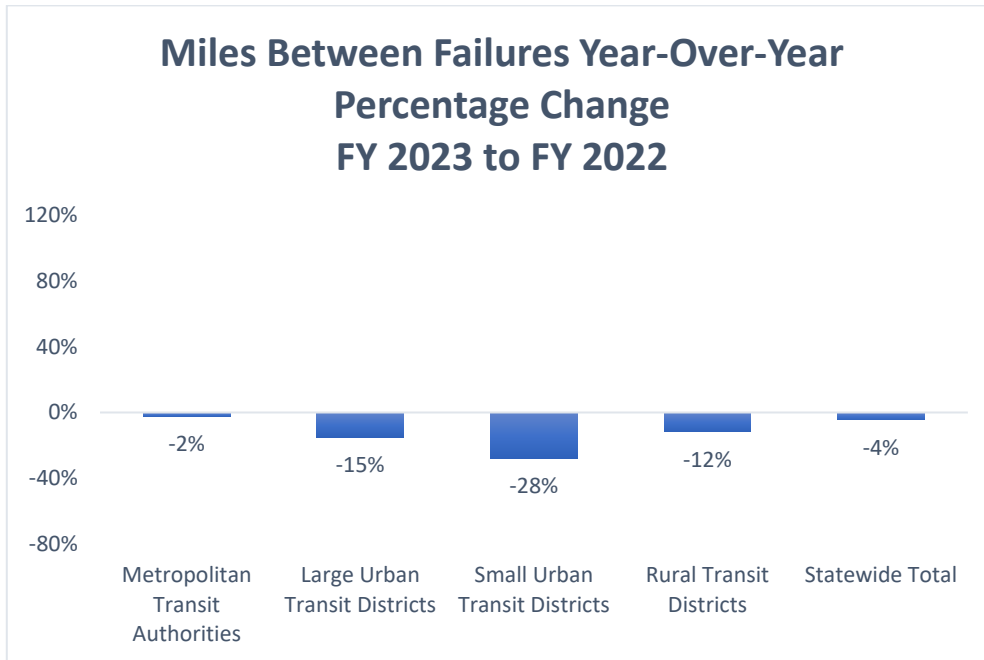
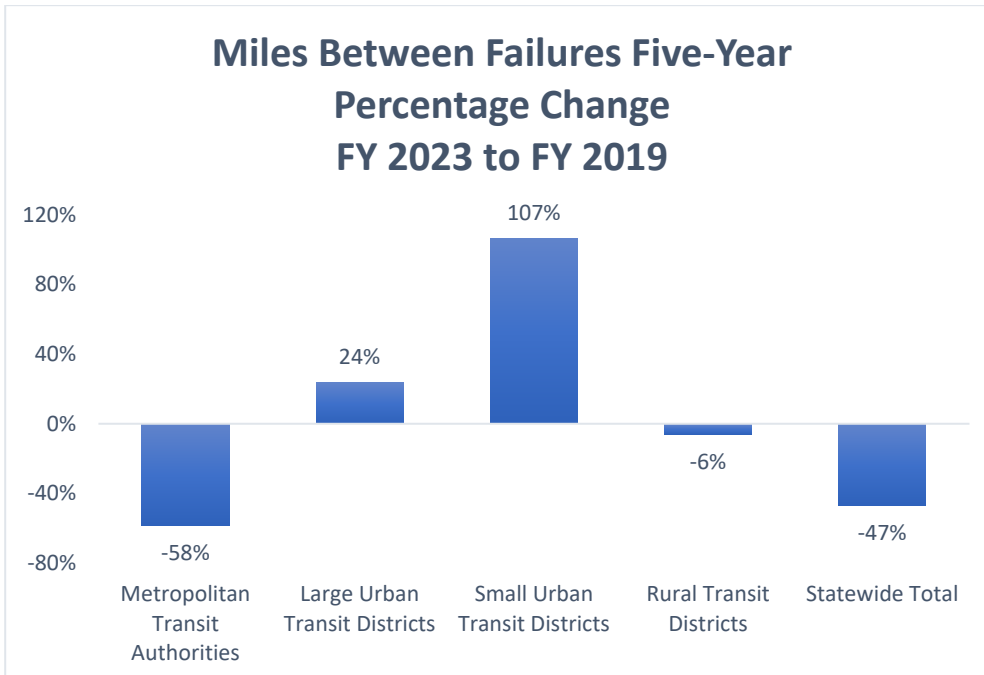


CHART ES-12. MILES BETWEEN VEHICLE FAILURES PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM FISCAL YEAR 2023 TO FISCAL YEAR 2019



- **Metropolitan Transit Authorities:** Reported a 2% reduction in vehicle reliability compared to last year. The 58% decrease in vehicle reliability from 2019 can be attributed to an ongoing effort for Metropolitan Transit Authorities to more consistently report vehicle failures.
- **Large Urban Transit Districts:** Reported a 15% reduction in vehicle reliability compared to last year but a 24% increase in vehicle reliability compared to 2019.
- **Small Urban Transit Districts:** Experienced the most significant reduction in vehicle reliability compared to last year—reporting a 28% decrease in miles between vehicle failures. However, Small Urban Transit Districts reported the most significant increase in vehicle reliability compared to 2019—reporting a 107% increase in miles between vehicle failures.
- **Rural Transit Districts:** Reported a 12% decrease in vehicle reliability compared to last year and a 6% decrease compared to 2019.
- **Statewide Total:** Miles between vehicle failures decreased by 326 miles (4%) compared to last year, continuing a downward trend. Miles between vehicle failures decreased by 6,105 miles (47%) compared to 2019. The statewide total is largely driven by the reduction in vehicle reliability reported by Metropolitan Transit Authorities.

Large Urban, Small Urban, and Rural Transit Districts all reported higher or similar levels of vehicle reliability when compared to their 2019 levels. Metropolitan Transit Authorities saw the biggest decrease in reliability compared to 2019 levels, suggesting significant challenges in maintaining vehicle reliability. This is the fourth year in a row that Metropolitan Transit Authorities reported a decrease in vehicle reliability, and they also reported the lowest overall miles between vehicle failures out of the four agency types.

Conclusion

When considering all performance measures, it appears that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are subsiding, but some impacts continue. In summary:

- Transit-related safety incidents, fatalities, and injuries remain higher than 2019 levels despite some improvements in safety trends from last year.
- Public transit ridership in Texas increased over last year but has not yet fully recovered to 2019 numbers.
- Service levels are largely back to 2019 levels.
- Inflationary pressures have caused cost growth but cost efficiency and cost effectiveness appear to be recovering.
- Vehicle reliability continues to be an issue—especially in metropolitan areas.

The 2024 statistics report will not use a “pre-pandemic” baseline comparison. There are many indications that public transportation data has plateaued from 2022 to 2023. For example, Cost per Revenue Mile and Cost per Passenger Trip were both very consistent from FY 2022 to FY 2023 but had a large difference in their FY 2019 to FY 2023 data. We expect this plateau to be the “new normal” and believe pre-pandemic data will be out-of-date in 2024.