2024 INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS

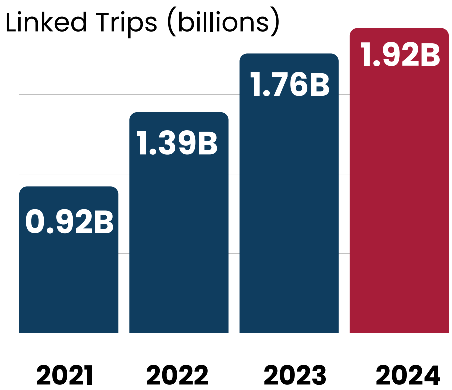
Key takeaways from the 2024 CUTA Factbook

January 2026

CUTA
ACTU

CANADIAN PUBLIC TRANSIT IN 2024

RIDERSHIP GROWTH CONTINUES



28 SYSTEMS
Operating On-demand transit services

CONTINUED GROWTH
9% increase in ridership from 2023

4 NEW RAIL LINES OPENED

- O-Train Line 2 (Ottawa)
- O-Train Line 4 (Ottawa)
- Montreal REM extension
- Toronto Line 6 - Finch West

VEHICLE STATISTICS

18,599
Public Transit Vehicles in Canada

32%
of Canadian transit vehicles are electric or hybrid, compared to 7.6% ten years ago (2014)

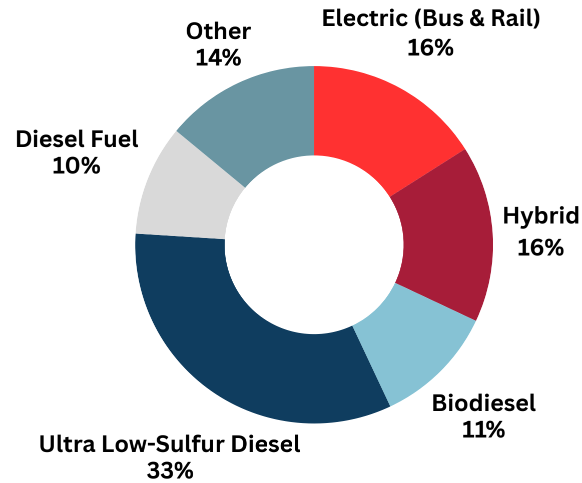
16,267
Buses

1,099,985,770 KM
Revenue vehicle kilometers in 2024, ensuring growing service levels for Canadians

EFFICIENCY

Despite achieving the second-highest service levels in a decade (2014-2024, measured in revenue vehicle kilometres), overall energy consumption has stayed steady, demonstrating the industry's gains in efficiency

VEHICLES BY PROPULSION TYPE



EMPLOYEES

1,268 JOBS ADDED IN 2024

4,114
FULL-TIME VEHICLE MECHANICS

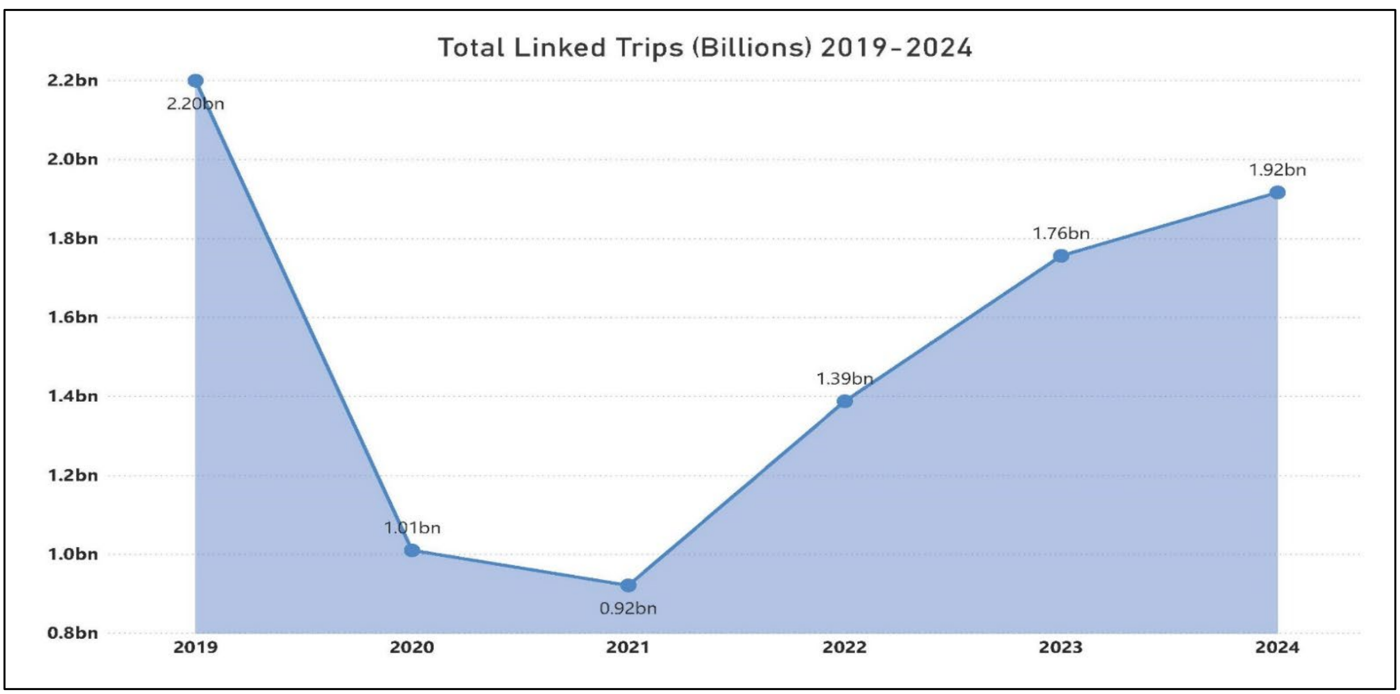
30,616
FULL-TIME OPERATORS

2024 Industry Highlights

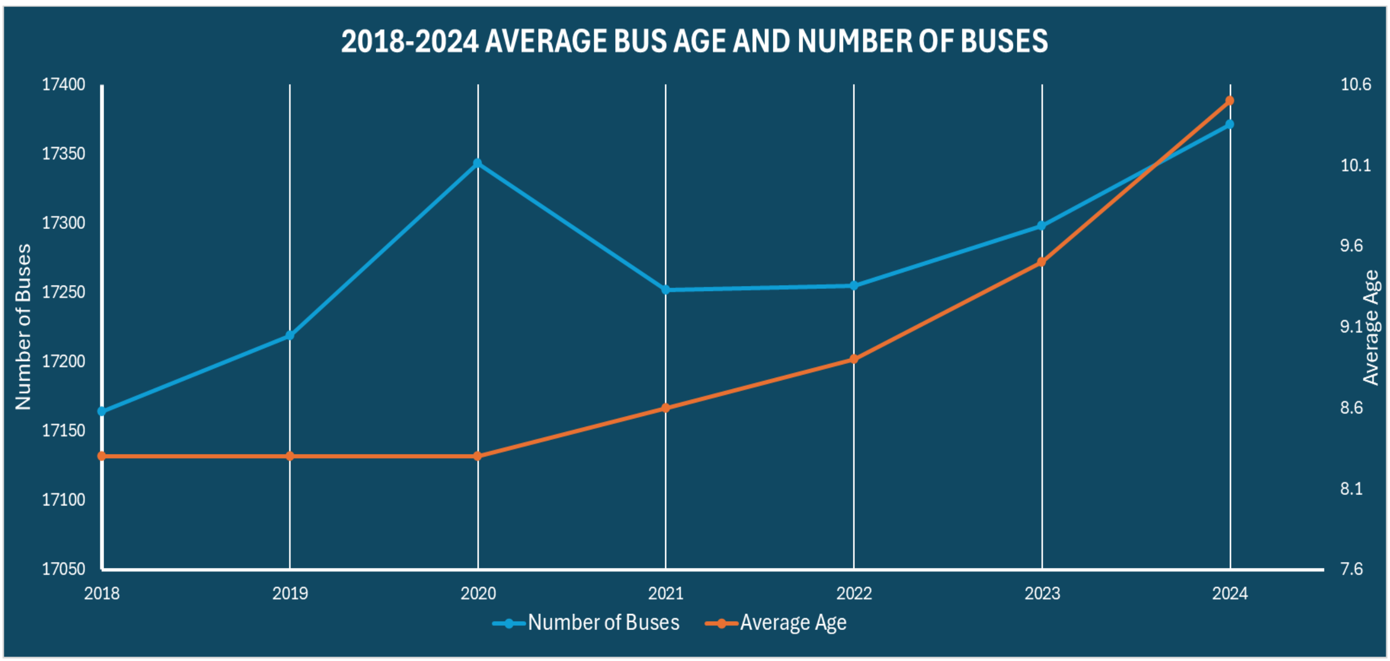
Key takeaways from the 2024 CUTA Factbook

The *Industry Data Highlights* publication provides a high-level summary of key trends and performance indicators drawn from CUTA's Annual Transit Fact Book. It is intended to offer readers a concise snapshot of the state of public transit in Canada, highlighting changes in ridership, service levels, fleet condition, and financial performance across CUTA member transit systems. While the Annual Fact Book presents detailed system-level data, this publication focuses on sector-wide patterns and emerging issues to support discussion among transit professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders who may not be familiar with the full dataset.

Canada's public transit systems continued their ridership recovery in 2024, with growth moderating after several years of rapid rebound while financial and operational pressures persisted. CUTA transit system members reported providing approximately 1.92 billion linked trips in 2024, reflecting continued increases in ridership per capita since 2021, though at a slower pace than in the previous three years. While operating revenues largely recovered to near pre-pandemic levels, rising operating and maintenance costs—driven in part by inflation and aging vehicle fleets—kept improvements in financial performance modest. Transit agencies across the country faced evolving travel patterns, including a return to offices in major metropolitan centres, shifting population dynamics, and changing post-secondary enrolment trends, all of which influenced ridership outcomes regionally. At the same time, service levels remained relatively stable as agencies balanced demand recovery with ongoing cost pressures and long-term fleet renewal challenges.

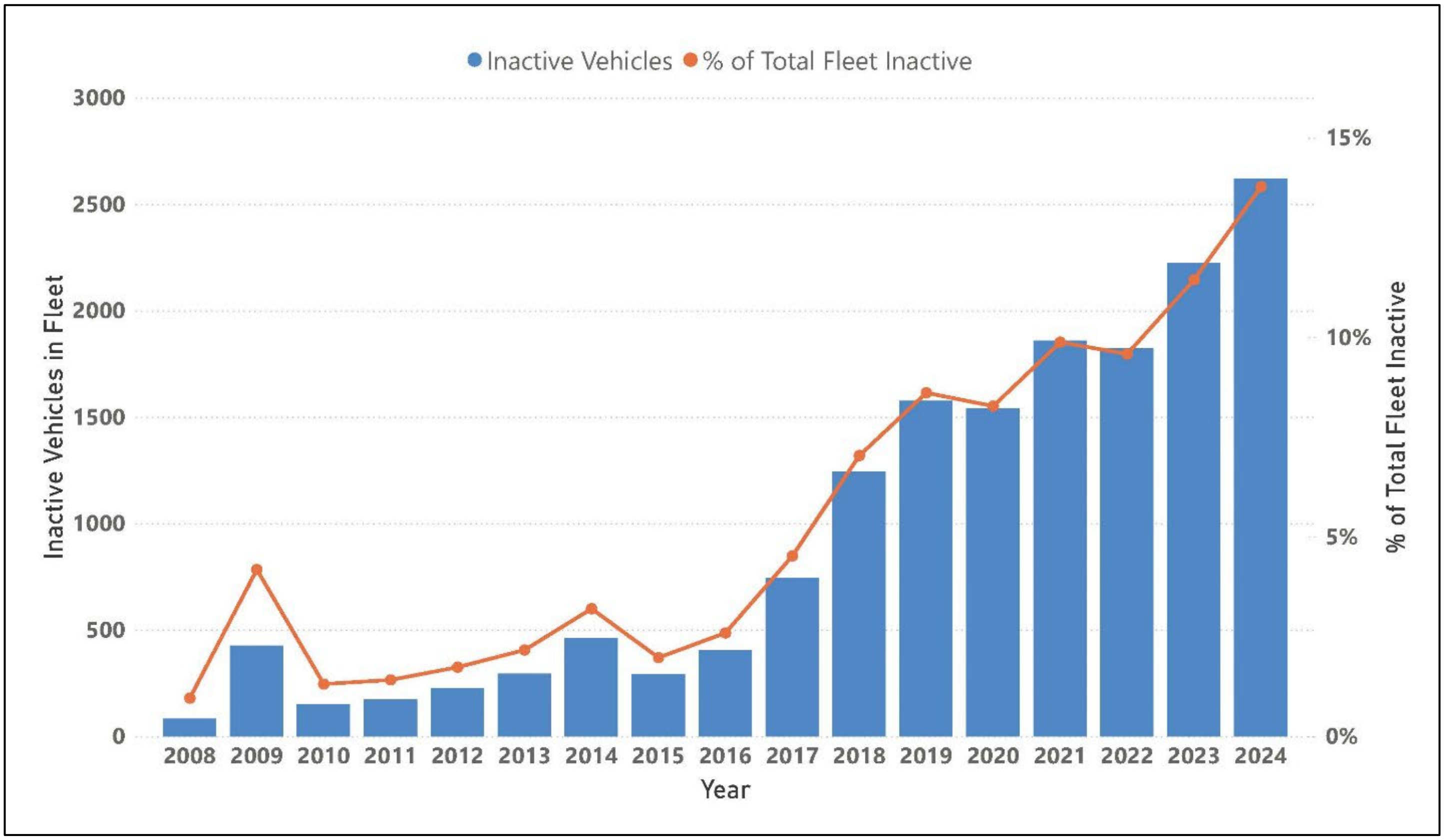


Aging fleets were a cause for concern post pandemic (2021-2023), as systems and manufacturers were catching up from the constraints on supply chains of vehicle production and delivery. While the post-pandemic supply chain problems aren't explicitly a cause of the issues in 2024, the effects of supply chain disruption can still be seen in the rising average bus age among Canadian transit systems. The average age of a bus in Canada grew to 10.4 years in 2024, up from 9.5 in 2023. A main concern of an aging fleet is the rise in maintenance costs, with Canadian transit systems spending approximately $106 million more on vehicle maintenance in 2024 in comparison to the previous year (2024 total vehicle maintenance cost for transit systems was $2,166,399,459). With tariffs imposed by the United States in 2025 further disrupting the supply chain of bus manufacturing and delivery, an aging fleet in Canada will continue to be a concern in the future.

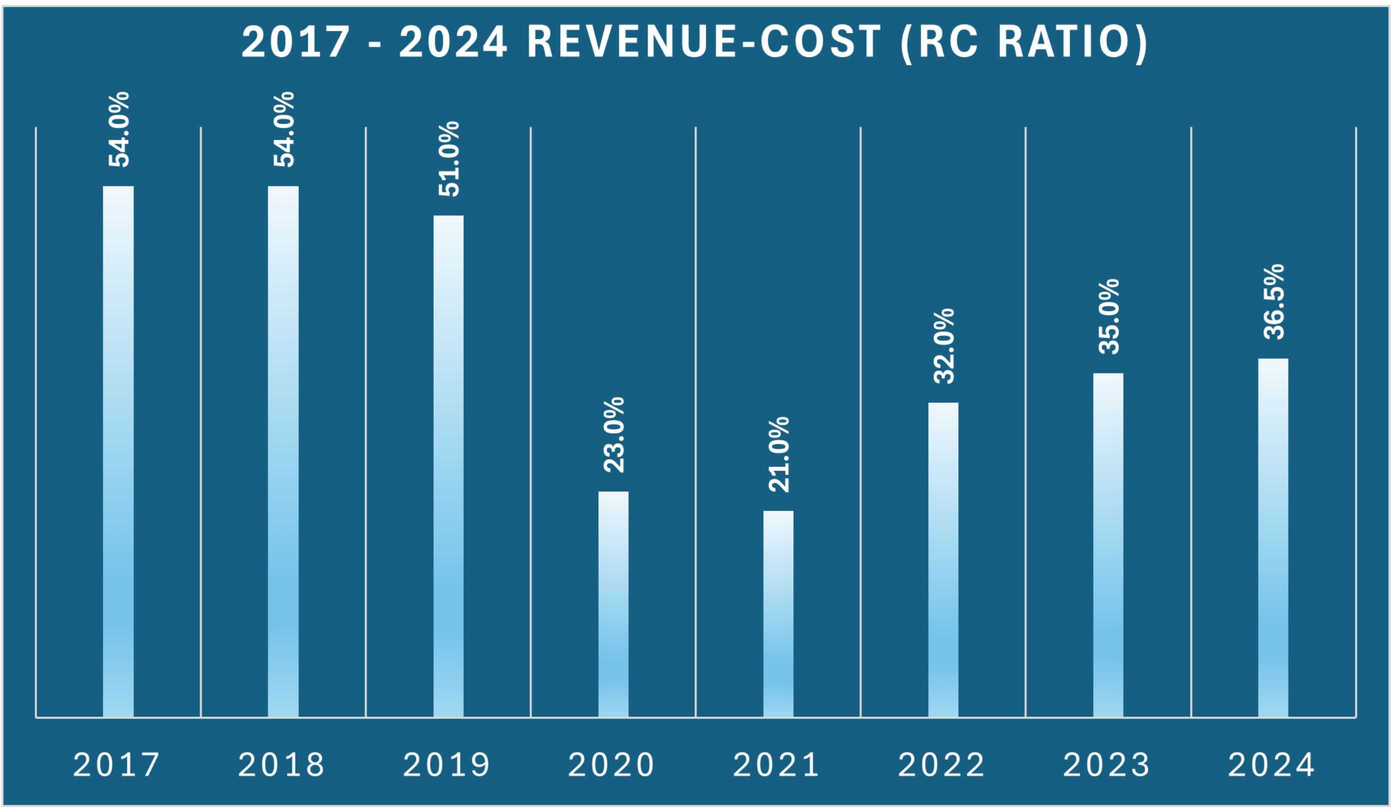


Examining inactive vehicles over time provides additional context on the operational impacts of fleet aging beyond average age measures. The number of transit vehicles unavailable for service has increased in recent years. While inactive vehicles continue to represent a relatively small share of the total fleet, the upward trend in both the absolute number of inactive vehicles and the proportion of the fleet not in active service underscores mounting pressures on system capacity and maintenance resources.

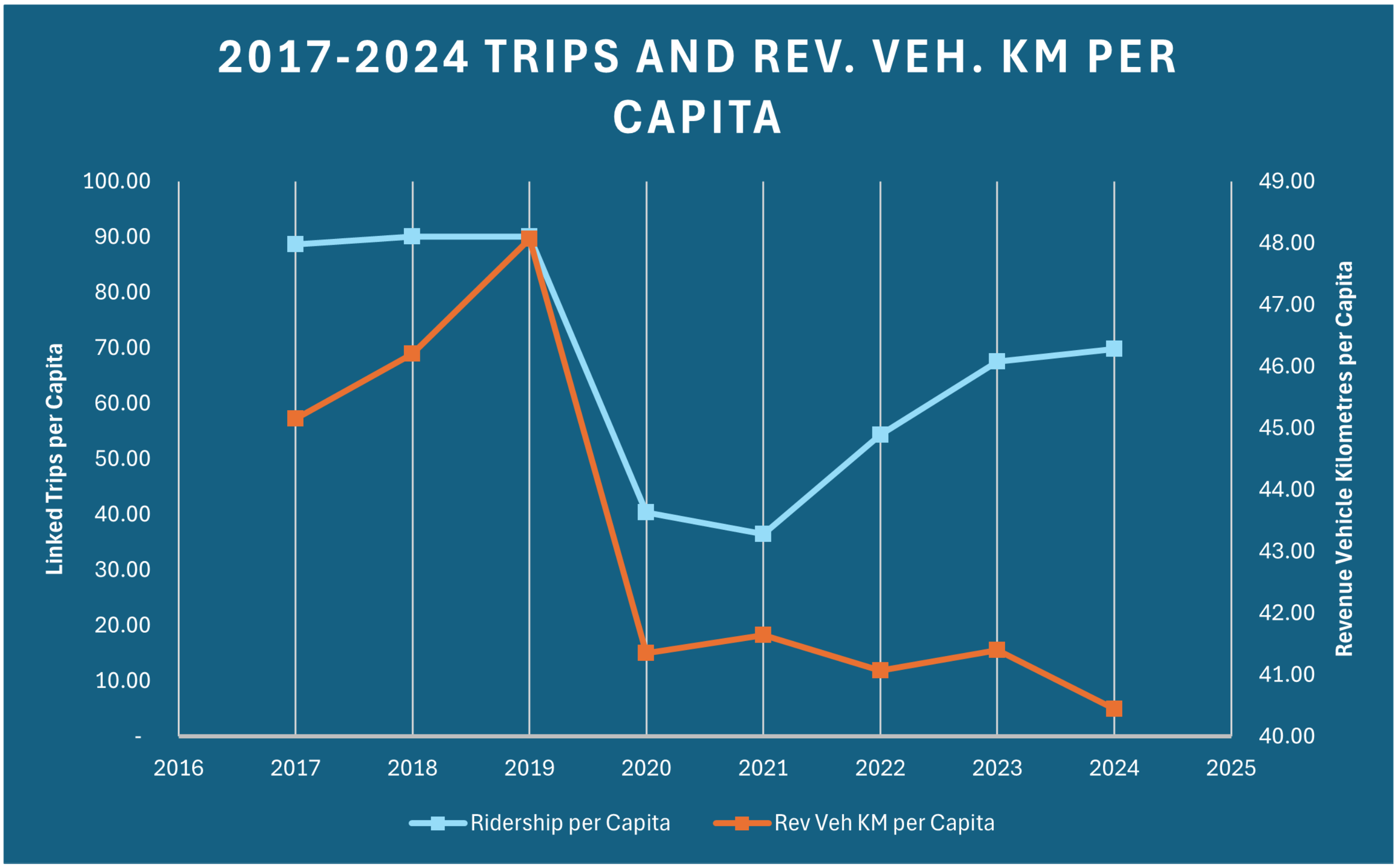
The accompanying chart illustrates these trends by showing the annual number of inactive vehicles alongside the share of the fleet that is inactive (orange line). Although year-to-year changes remain moderate, the gradual increase in inactivity rates highlights the cumulative effects of aging vehicles, deferred replacement, and rising maintenance requirements. As operating costs continue to increase, sustained growth in inactive vehicles may constrain service delivery and reinforce the need for timely fleet renewal to maintain reliable transit operations.



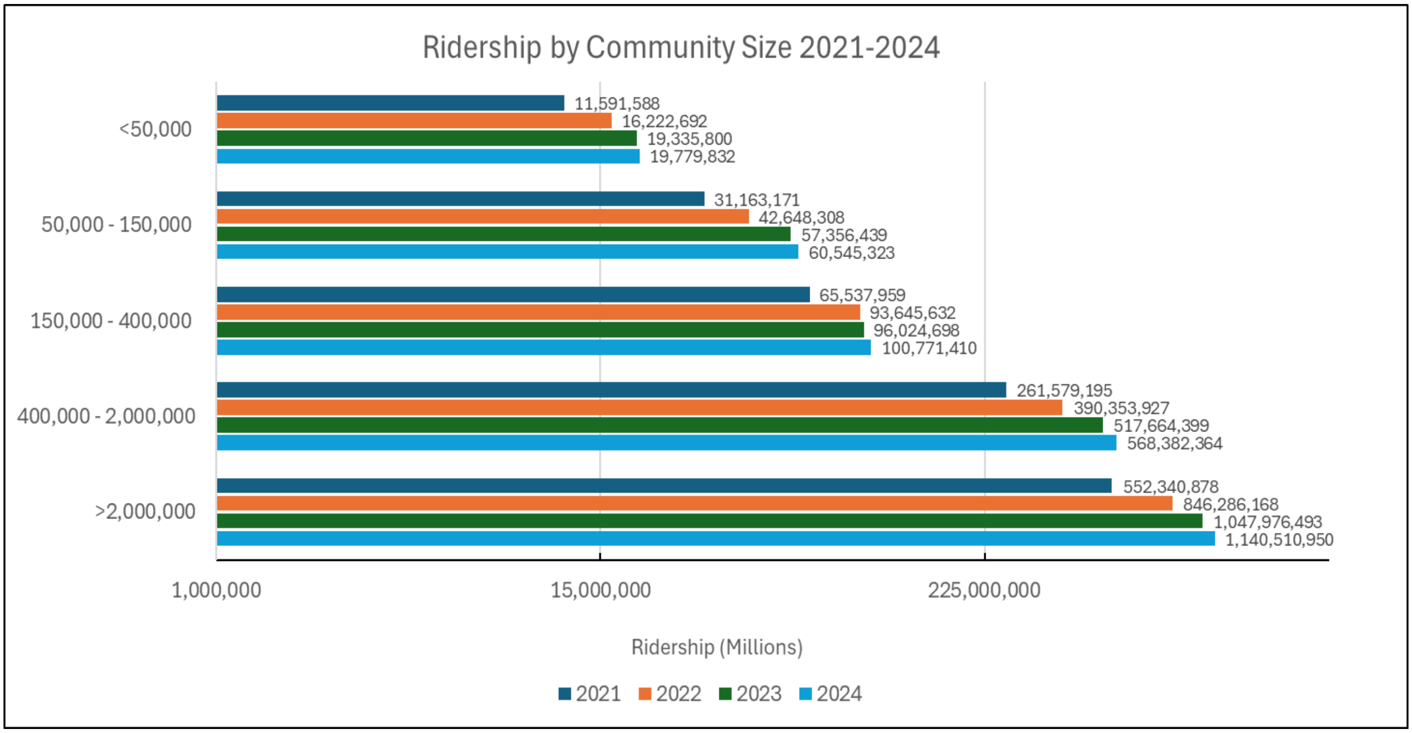
A main indicator of the financial position of transit systems is the Revenue-Cost Ratio (RC Ratio), which is marked as the portion of operating costs that are offset by operating revenues. While the total operating revenue of Canadian transit systems has recovered in 2024 ($4,826,710,243 total operating revenue) to slightly less than 2019 revenue ($4,976,600,147), increased operating cost has kept the RC ratio increases marginal. The total operating cost of $15,171,323,038 in 2024 is the largest dollar amount seen among Canadian transit systems, however, this was only a 6% increase from 2023. In comparison, 2023 saw a 10% increase in the total operating cost from 2022. Total operating costs will continue to increase with inflation and other factors, but there is some hope for a return to higher RC ratios if operating revenues continue to increase at the rate seen in 2024.



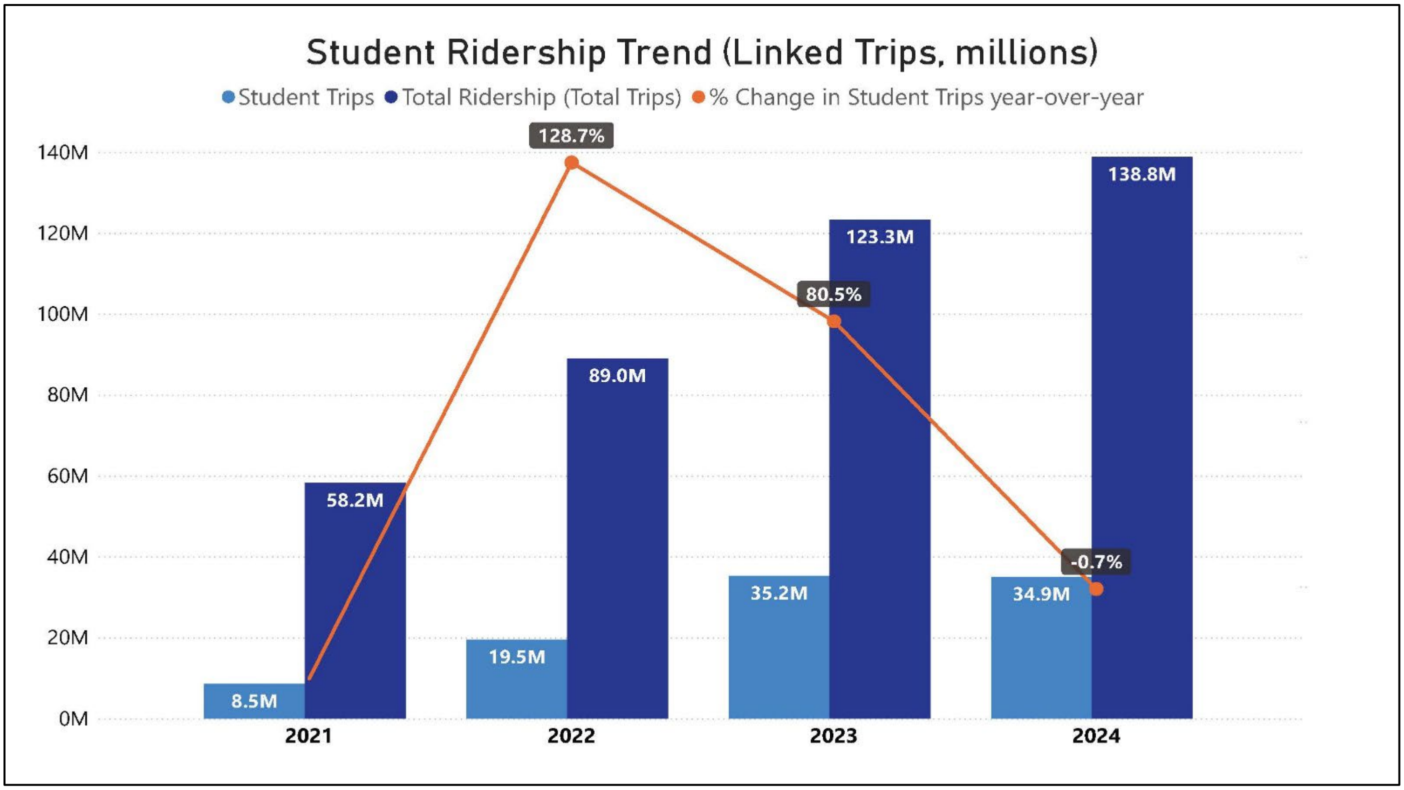
CUTA transit system members reported providing approximately 1.92 billion linked trips in 2024. Ridership serves as a key indicator of demand for public transit, while revenue vehicle kilometers reflect the level of service supplied. Since 2021, ridership per capita has continued to rise as travel behaviour normalizes following the pandemic. However, unlike the rapid recovery observed between 2021 and 2023, ridership growth in 2024 moderated, signaling a transition toward more stable, incremental gains. Over the same period, revenue vehicle kilometers changed only marginally, as transit agencies largely maintained existing service levels while managing cost pressures, labour constraints, and fleet availability. As a result, demand growth continued to outpace service expansion in many systems, highlighting ongoing capacity and resource challenges as ridership recovery progresses.



In 2023, ridership was highlighted by the smaller communities collectively reaching record numbers of linked trips. Work location flexibility and rising costs of living and housing sparked movement of population from major urban centers. In 2024, the largest growth in ridership was seen in the larger population centers (population of 400,000-2,000,000 and >2,000,000). Ridership grew 9.3% in 2024 among the two largest population groups depicted above, while the smaller three community sizes averaged 4.3% growth from 2023. Housing and living costs are still relatively high but return to offices in metropolitan centers have sparked higher activity in Canada's largest cities.



2024 marked the first year of an international student cap in Canada, with study permit issuance reduced by 35% compared to 2023. The impact of this reduction is reflected in ridership trends of Canadian transit systems in 2024. The graph below presents data from a sample of nine municipalities with post-secondary institutions enrolling more than 20,000 students and serving populations under one million. In the years leading up to the current decline, student ridership in the sample grew rapidly, increasing by 56% in 2022 and a further 45% in 2023—outpacing both national ridership growth and the growth observed across all Canadian municipalities in the same population range. In 2024, however, this trend reversed: while total ridership across the sample increased by 11% (comparable to the 8.4% national ridership growth of all Canadian systems), student ridership declined by approximately 300,000 trips. This trend will be interesting to follow as study permits will be capped further until 2028, and large portions of current study permit holders graduate and finish their education.



**Sample criteria - all municipalities with a population of less than 1,000,000 that have post-secondary institutions of more than 20,000 students.*

Please note that the following statistics do not include transit agencies that were not CUTA members in 2024, although CUTA transit system members represent the majority of Canadian transit ridership.

CUTA
ACTU

CANADIAN URBAN TRANSIT ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DU TRANSPORT URBAIN

Head Office
55 York Street Suite 1401
Toronto, ON Canada M5J 1R7
Tel. : 416-365-9800

Ottawa Office
Suite 200, 440 Laurier Ave. W.
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1R 7X6

www.cutaactu.ca

cutaactu@cutaactu.ca